

ANAND BINDU

By

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Prabhu Doesn't Like A Curtain.

Once, Shri Udiya Babaji Maharaj sent me to do a *kathaa* (discourse) of the Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapurana to a Maharani. All the arrangements were excellent. A beautiful elevated seat had been made for me, and I went and sat on it.

Then I saw a fine curtain of bamboo reeds on one side. The Maharani came and sat on a seat behind the curtain. She did not sit before me.

'If the Maharani wants to listen to the Bhagwat from behind a curtain, ask her to call some other Pundit,' I said. 'If she wishes to hear it from me, let her remove the curtain and sit before me; otherwise, I will not narrate the katha.'

The Maharani ordered the curtain to be removed. She came and sat before me, and listened to the katha with great love and interest.

Similarly, Prabhu (Bhagwan) doesn't like a curtain between Him and His bhaktas. If you wish to meet Prabhu, you will have to cast away the veil that hides yourself from Him. Prabhu abides in every heart. When you discard the names of all the objects, forms and actions, that which remains, is Prabhu; even if it may be just a blade of grass! As soon as you remove the curtain of the name, form and action of the blade of grass, you will get Prabhu as the Sat (that, which can never be negated; pure existence). Know that it is Prabhu who exists in all forms.

Surrender yourself completely to Prabhu, with all the feelings in your heart. This is called '*sharana*' – to take refuge. Meet only Him. When He is pleased He will remove all the veils and meet you. Prabhu does not like any form of concealment. This completely candid meeting results in obtaining Prabhu, who is supreme peace. This is the eternal realm that has no kind of disruption of bliss. It neither changes nor shifts; nor does it waver. In it, there is no coming and leaving. Supreme peace prevails.

Tatprasaadaat paraam shaantim – His Grace bestows supreme peace.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Master! It Was My Mistake.

A gentleman wanted to hire a servant. He called candidates for an interview to select a suitable man. He would ask each applicant to fetch him a glass of water. When the man brought it, he would tell him to throw away the water. Then he would ask the man why he threw the water away. Naturally, the man would reply, 'Because you told me to.'

'Yes, you are right,' he would say. 'You may go.'

One applicant responded differently to his question about why he threw away the water. 'Master, it was my mistake,' he said. The man was selected for the job.

It is the same in bhakti (loving devotion and faith for Bhagwan). In bhakti, whether it is '*bhajataam ananyabhaak*' (single minded devotion), or '*bhaktyaa maamabhijaananti*' (My bhakta knows Me), the feeling a *jeeva* (individual being) has – *niyojya kartritva* (this is my ordained duty) – remains. This is a technical word of the bhaktas. Bhagwan is the *mukhya kartaa* (principal doer), and the jeeva is secondary; he is the designated instrument. The jeeva does what Bhagwan inspires him to do. He is not insolent even if he makes some mistake. He does not try to evade accepting the responsibility for what he did. A jeeva doesn't tell Bhagwan, 'I made this mistake because of You.'

Se`vaka so jo kare`se`vakaayee. (A servant is one who serves.)

A true servant of Bhagwan never blames Bhagwan for what happens;
he takes the blame on himself.

Guna tumhaara samujhai nija doshoo.

(All the good qualities are Yours, Prabhu, and all the faults are mine.)

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Deenabandhu, Deenanath, Meri Dori Tere Haath.

A girl who lived in Vrindavan was married to a boy whose family had settled in Pakistan. A few days after the wedding, it was decided that the newly-weds should also go and live in Pakistan.

Narayana! The girl was mature. She was also a Krishna-bhakta. The thought of having to leave Vrindavan filled her with anguish. 'I will have to leave the place where my beloved Shri Krishna did His *leela* (frolics)! Which blighted person would want to leave Vrindavan?' She prayed, 'O Prabhu! How will I live in Pakistan, away from Vrindavan?' She began to chant, '*Deenabandhu, deenaanaatha, me`ri dori te`re` haatha* (O friend of the helpless, O Master of the helpless, my life is in Your hands. I take refuge in You! Protect me!).'

She chanted this continuously for three days. The prayer rose from the depths of her heart. On the fourth day, a telegram came from the boy's father, from Pakistan. It said, 'My son, now that you are married, stay in Vrindavan. I am sending you one lakh rupees. Build up a new line of business with this. There is no need for you to come to Pakistan. Live happily in Vrindavan.'

Narayana! When an intense prayer rises in the heart, when the heart sends out a fervent appeal that mingles with Bhagwan's name, it has an amazing effect. You have heard the story of the elephant, Gajendra, who called out desperately to Bhagwan to save him from the crocodile, and how Govind freed him. Draupadi's desperate cry made Bhagwan take an Avatar as her garment and saved her from being disrobed in public. There is great power in prayer. It is the miracle of prayer that makes the impossible possible. Sita-Rama! The heartfelt call of a bhakta has the power to shake even Bhagwan's throne!

Jaraa bhaavanaa se` keejiye` pukaara, udaasee mana kahe` ko kare`?

Te`raa raamaji kare`nge` be`daa paara.

(Call Him with faith and Ramji will save you. Why do you let your mind become despondent?)

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Yathotkari Bhagwan.

There is a Mandir of Bhagwan Narayana in Kanchi, in South India.

The Raja had appointed a Pujari (priest) for Narayana's ritual worship. The Pujari was a Brahmin. He was also a devotee of a Mahatma who lived in Kanchi.

One day, the Raja got angry with the Pujari. 'Leave my kingdom and go away from my realm,' he told the Pujari. The Pujari went to the Mahatma. 'Mahatmaji,' he said, 'the Raja has banished me from his realm. I am leaving this land.'

'My son,' said the Mahatma, 'it is you who gives me food to eat and water to drink. It is you who takes care of my every need. How will I live here if you go away? I will also go with you.'

What was the Pujari to say? Mahatmas do as they please. He would obey the Mahatma. As they started, the Mahatma said, 'My son, let us speak to Bhagwan before we go.' They went to Narayana. The Mahatma said, 'Narayana, we are leaving Kanchi.'

'I stay with Mahatmas,' said Narayana. 'How will I stay here if you go away? I will also go with you.' Narayana rolled up His *she'sha shaiyaa* (the serpent called She'sha on whom Narayana sleeps), and tucked it under His arm. The Pujari's items of worship were tucked under his arm, the Mahatma's meager possessions were tucked under his arm, and they set off. The Pujari lead the way, the Mahatma following the Pujari, and Narayana following the Mahatma.

Darkness descended on the city as they walked away. The Raja went running after them. He fell at Narayana's feet, 'Prabhu! Please don't go away!'

'Rajan,' said Narayana, 'How can I stay here when My Mahatma goes from here? I will stay if you convince My Mahatma to stay.'

The Raja pleaded with the Mahatma to stay. 'How can I stay here if my servant goes away?' asked the Mahatma. 'Rajan, you will have to convince my servant to stay.'

Ultimately the Raja persuaded the Pujari to stay on. The Pujari returned, the Mahatma returned, and Narayana also returned. When Narayana spread out His shesha-shaiya, He put it the wrong way, so that the hoods of Sheshaji were turned over His feet instead of over His head, as He reclines. In Sanskrit, this is called the '*yathotkaaree bhagavaana*' – the obedient Bhagwan!

It is Bhagwan's special quality that He lets go of pride and does what His servants say. The Mahatma said, 'Narayana, I am leaving this city', and Narayana went with him. When the Mahatma stayed on, Narayana also stayed on. This is why He is called 'Yathotkari Bhagwan'

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Bandaun Nama Raghuvara Ko.

(I salute the Name of Rama, the most superior person in the lineage of Raghu.)

‘*Naama*’ – the name of Bhagwan – is something that softens the hard object. That, which makes a hard heart *namra* (soft; humble) is called the ‘nama’. We praise the name of Rama, who is the most superior person in the lineage of the great Raja Raghu. All Sants (Mahatmas) say, ‘*Rama brahm paramaaratha roopaa.*’

(Rama is the Brahman who is the form of the Supreme Achievement.)

Rama is the Brahman. Rama is the name of the Parameshwara. Guru Nanak, Kabir, and others say that Rama is the Para-Brahman Paramatma (the Supreme Atma of all). Goswami Tulsidasji says, ‘All these people may say that Rama is the name of the Brahman, but I say:

Bandaun naama raama raghuvara ko – I worship the name, ‘Rama’, of Raghuvara (the most superior of Raghu’s lineage). It may be the name of the *niraakaara* (formless) Ishwara (the Brahman with attributes), isn’t it? Rama would be another name for Om. The name of Rama may resound in the heart. My brother, I am speaking in a straightforward, rustic style, and I praise the name of Rama who is Raghuvara.’

Raghu means ‘Raghuvansha’ – the lineage of Raghu, who was a great King. Vara means a superior person. Goswamiji praises the most superior person of Raghu’s lineage.

Raghu also means *laghu* – small; and laghu means *jeeva* (an Atma attached to a body; an individual who identifies with his body). Raghuvara means laghuvara. The ‘vara’ (husband) of the jeeva.

Tulsidasji Maharaj praises the name of Rama, who is the lord of the Jeeva – *vandaun naama raama raghuvara ko*.

This word, 'Rama', is quite extraordinary. There was a Mahatma. We used to go for his Satsang (spiritual talks). One day, he told us, 'All the joints in the body form the *re`fa* (the syllable 'r' in the Devnagiri script). Just observe the joints in your body. Isn't the joint of your arm in the shape of 'r'? Bend your finger and see. Bend from your waist and see. Bend your knee and see. All the joints make the same form. So, what is our body made of? It is made of the *refa*!

Let go of the *raaga* (attachments); let go of the *dve`sha* (hatred). Don't think of yourself as a human, a Hindu, a Brahmin, or a Sanyasi. Just think, 'This body of mine is made of *refa*.' You will see your *de`ha-abhimaana* (the subtle ego of identifying your Self with your gross physical body) vanish. The letter 'r' in Rama is a fire that burns up your *dehabhiman*. It is a wonderful thing.

The fact is, the name of Rama of the Raghuvansha is the cause of *agni* (fire), *aaditya* (the sun), and the *chandramaa* (moon).

He`tu krisaanu bhaanu himakara ko – the name of Rama is the form of *krishaanu*, the form of Agni. It creates a fire that frees us from our worldly bonds. It is *rudraatmaka*, the form of Rudra, Shiva, the destroyer. The name of Rama is *bhaanuroopa* – the form of the Sun. It illuminates. The name of Rama is the form of *himakara* – the Moon; it is as soothing as moonlight. The roots of Agni, Surya and Chandrama are all present in 'Rama'. The syllables are 'r', 'aa', and 'm'. 'R' is the Agni-beej, 'aa' is the Aditya-beej, and 'm' is the Chandra-beej.

When we meditate on Rama, the focus of our speech, vision, and mind unite into a single point. The Agni-beej focuses the speech, the Aditya-beej focuses the vision, and the Chandra-beej focuses the mind. The result is that all the inclinations of the mind become focused on Bhagwan.

If someone says, '*Raaaaama! Raaaaama! Raaaaama! Raaaaama!*' chanting it in an enlongated manner, the voice, vision and mind will be stilled. The *japa* (ritual chanting) of the name of Rama results in the five *karme`ndriya* (organs of action) and the five *gnaane`ndriya* (sense organs) and the *antahkarana* (subtle body, or fourfold mind) will be absolutely collected, and the person will attain a state of Samadhi (deep meditation). He will get a *darshan* (seeing someone revered) of the Paramatma.

Goswami Tulsidasji Maharaj says that he doesn't want the darshan of the Paramatma; he wants the darshan of Shri Rama who frolics in the external world.

The fact is that a person obtains the darshan of Rama only when the difference of the external world and the inner world is obliterated. To think that the Rama seated in the heart – imprisoned in the cage of the heart – is different from the Rama who frolics on this earth, is absolutely wrong. My brother, Rama frolics within the heart and also in the world outside. Rama is one and the same. This most superior scion of the lineage of Raghu is the form of Rama. We salute Him!

Ramante` yogino yasmin nityaanande` chidaatmani,
iti raamapade` naasau parabrahmaabhidheeyate`.

(He, who is the Atma, frolicking in the consciousness of Yogis, bestowing pure bliss, is the Para-brahm – the supreme – who is no other than Rama.)

Chinmaye`smin mahaavishnau jaate`dasharathe`harau,

raghohkule`khilam raati raajate`yo maheesthitah.

Sa raama iti loka`smin vidvadbhih prakateekritah.

(This Maha Vishnu, who is pure consciousness, manifested on this earth as the son of Dashrath, in the lineage of Raghu. He is Vidhi – Brahma, the Creator; He is Hari – Vishnu, the sustainer; and He is Hara – Shiva, the destroyer.)

The name of Rama is the essence of the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of this world. The syllables ‘r’, ‘aa’, and ‘m’ are the root of all the Devtas. ‘R’ means Brahma, ‘aa’ means Vishnu, and ‘m’ means Rudra. The name of Rama symbolizes all three.

The name of Rama is the *praana* (life spirit) of the Vedas. The Pranav – Om – is the prana of the Vedas. The Pranav has three *maatras* (syllables) – a, u, m – and one *a-maatraa* (silent syllable).

‘A’ means the gross physical body, the *sattva guna* (lofty tendencies), the *jaagrita avasthaa* (waking state), the *vyashti abhimaani vishva* (the world of an individual), and the *samashti abhimaani viraat* (the Brahman manifested as this world).

‘U’ means the subtle body, the *rajo guna* (mixed tendencies), *svapna avasthaa* (dream state), the *vyashti abhimaani te`jas* (the consciousness in the individual) and the *samashti abhimaani hiranyagarbha* (the consciousness that pervades the world).

‘M’ means the causal body (the factors that cause the individual’s birth), the *tamo guna* (lowly tendencies), *sushupti avasthaa* (deep sleep state), the *vyashti abhimaani praagnya* (the understanding of an individual) and the *samashti abhimaani eeshvara* (the Brahman with attributes who rules the world).

‘A-matra’ means the *tureeya para-brahm paramaatmaa* (the Supreme Atma) who is beyond the gross, subtle and causal bodies, beyond the three gunas of Sattva, Raja and Tama, beyond the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, beyond the Vishva-Taijas and Hiranyagarbha, Pragnya Ishwara, and the vyashti-samashti.

The Pranav is a name of the Paramatma. ‘*Tasya vaachako pranavah.*’ The name of Rama is an indication of the Pranav, which is the form of the Paramatma.

The name of Rama is *a-guna* (free of gunas); beyond Sattva, Raja, Tama. The name of Rama is incomparable; nothing in the world can compare with it. It is a storehouse of all the superior qualities. The fact is, the name of Rama is free of gunas – it is not a storehouse of gunas, but it is perceived as having all virtues. You can obtain whatever you want from the name of Rama. It is also the Tattva (essence) that is Rama. The Tattva and the name are not separate; they are absolutely one.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

The One Name Of Rama.

The name of Rama is equal to a thousand names of Bhagwan. If you say 'Rama' once, it is akin to saying His thousand names. Bhagwan Shankar himself told Bhagawati Parvati that uttering the name of Rama once, is equal to reciting the *sahasranaama* (thousand names of Vishnu Bhagwan).

Shankarji and Parvatiji always have their meals together. One day, Parvatiji was delayed. Shankarji said, 'O Beautiful lady, come, let us have our lunch.'

'Swami,' she replied, 'my *niyama* (daily routine of worship) is not done yet.'

'What is your niyam, Beloved?'

'It is my niyam to recite the Sahasranama every day. I should complete this and then eat, isn't it?'

'Devi,' said Shankarji, 'you are attached to a thousand names; I am attached to just one. My Sahasranama is contained in just one name – Rama.

Raama raame`ti raame`ti rame` raame` manorame`,

Sahasranaama tattulyam raamanaama varaanane`.

(O most beautiful lady, chant the name of Rama lovingly. It is equal to reciting the Sahasranama.)

My delight is in chanting the delightful name of Rama. Just that one name is equal to a thousand names of Bhagwan.'

Parvatiji was filled with joy when she heard about the greatness of Rama-nama. Lovingly, she chanted, 'Rama! Rama! Rama!' and then came quickly to sit with Shankarji for their meal. They enjoyed their meal together.

Shankarji was very happy to see the *pre`ma* (pure love) in Parvatiji's heart. Parvatiji is the most excellent of women. Shankar Bhagwan made her his ornament. Other Mahatmas say, 'Let women keep their distance.' Shankarji is a Mahatma. He keeps his wife as his *ardhaangini* (half of his body; an inseparable part of himself). He knows that a woman who has such *vishvaasa* (staunch faith) in Rama-nama is indeed the most superior among women. She should be made the most cherished object of his existence. Parvatiji always chants Rama-nama along with her husband and lord, Bhagwan Shankar.

Japa (ritual chanting) has great power, you know! We should always do the *japa* of Bhagwan's name. 'Rama' is a *mahaa mantra* (a word that has enormous metaphysical power). Shankar Bhagwan is fully aware of the powerful effect it has. When any being in Kashi (Varanasi) is close to death, Shankar Bhagwan tells him about how Rama-nama has the power to carry any being across the sea of suffering.

Rama-nama becomes the cause for Mukti (liberation from rebirth), of every being who dies in Kashi. The power of Rama-nama bestows *amritatva* (the elixir of immortality). Rama-nama is a life-giving *shakti* (power). The greatness of Rama-nama is immeasurable!

You, too, should chant Rama-nama joyfully, with prema in your heart.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Both Benefit.

When a woman has the *sanskaara* (subtle subconscious impressions) of Dharma, it is also a great benefit to men. If a woman is a *dharmaatmaa* (one who adheres to Dharma), she will not look at other men; she will be a devoted and loyal wife.

Men folk, however, are so foolish that they don't understand even this simple fact.

Men should also be dharmatmas, and encourage their womenfolk to be dharmatmas. It is a great benefit for a woman if her husband is a dharmatma who doesn't cast lascivious glances at other women. Men and women both benefit by being dharmatmas.

Narayana! Men indulge in *a-dhrama* (that, which is contrary to Dharma), and oppose the Dharma of their companions. The result is self-evident. Then they lament that society is depraved. This is not a sign of wisdom! Both men and women should decide to adhere to what is right and proper. They should worship Bhagwan together, and join hands in their efforts to obtain bhakti. This also enhances their mutual *shraddhaa-vishvaasa* (faith and trust). Vishwas is the father of prema, and *se`vaa* (rendering service) is the companion of prema.

Where there is Dharma, *upaasanaa* (loving worship), vishwas, prema and seva based on bhakti, it is natural for *sukha* (complete happiness and contentment) and anand to be there.

Sita-Rama! Being dharmatmas benefits both men and women. Isn't it so?

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Not To Be Taken Lightly.

Once I saw a man who had a small pimple – the size of a mustard seed – on his nose. Within a couple of days, his whole face became swollen and the pimple became the size of a mango. His whole face turned dark. The doctors kept trying to find a cure, but the man died in just four days.

No physical ailment should be taken lightly; it should be attended to at once. Illness should never be underestimated. Even a minor disease can turn fatal if neglected. One must always be vigilant to attend to the most minor of ailments.

Narayana! Even a single enemy can be extremely harmful. Even if your enemy is alone, he should never be taken lightly. A small spark of fire can turn into an inferno that reduces everything to ashes. A baby snake has enough venom to kill the man it bites. Even the smallest *papa-karma* (sinful act) can fill a man's life with poison.

Therefore, my brother, one should always be alert. Never consider an enemy, a snake, fire, illness, or wrong-doing to be insignificant.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Dharma Sankat.

(A Dilemma Of Dharma.)

On one occasion, Ravana began to lose in the battle with Shri Ramachandra. None of his weapons could harm Shri Ramachandra, so he invoked his *rakshasee maayaa* (Maya means illusion or delusion; Rakshasi means demonic). He ordered all his Rakshasas to transform themselves into long-horned cows, and kill the monkeys of Shri Rama's Army, and also Shri Rama Himself.

The Rakshasas used their powers of transformation and turned into cows with long, sharp horns. Shri Rama and Laxman stood helplessly, with their bows and arrows in their hands, watching the cows pierce the monkeys with their horns. How could they shoot at cows? It became a Dharma sankat (an ethical dilemma). The Rakshasas made full use of this opportunity, piercing the monkeys with their horns.

Shri Vibhishan came to Shri Ramachandra. 'Maharaj! What are You doing? We will lose if you stand there doing nothing!'

'What can I do, Vibhishan?' asked Shri Ramachandra helplessly. 'How can I shoot at cows, who we revere as sacred?'

'Maharaj, shoot the *vyaaghra astra* (the weapon where arrows turn into tigers).'

When Shri Ramachandra did this, His arrows – in the form of tigers – attacked the Rakshasas in the forms of cows. They ran away from the battlefield and resumed their natural forms. Then Bhagwan Rama killed them.

‘Rakshasaah kaamaroopinah’ – Rakshasas are the forms of *kaama* (desires). They have the ability to take on any form, or even several forms, to delude people. To gather them up and dispel this Maya, it is essential to follow the methods prescribed by the Mahatmas.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Only You!

There was a Raja who had many wives. Once, he decided to go abroad for a holiday. From there, he sent letters to all his wives, asking them to write the name of whatever object they would like him to bring for them, and send him their request. Each Rani wrote the name of what she wanted, but one Rani wrote only one word, 'One' in her reply and sent it to him.

When the Raja returned from his trip, he sent each Rani the item she had asked for. Then he went to the house of the Rani who had written only the number 'one' in her ambiguous reply. 'My dear,' he said, 'I did not understand what you meant; you wrote only the word 'one' in your letter. What is it that you want me to bring for you?'

The Rani replied lovingly, 'O lord of my heart, I have got what I wanted. There was no object I desired; I wanted only you. You have come back to me. Now I have everything.'

I had heard this story when I was a child, and liked it very much. The purport of this story is very touching. 'I want only You; I want nothing else.' Is it not so? Yes, it is! May this wish be fulfilled.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

I Choose You Alone.

Both Duryodhan and Arjuna went to Dwarka to ask for Shri Krishna's help for the approaching Mahabharata war. Duryodhan reached first. He saw Shri Krishna sleeping soundly, and sat down beside His head. Arjuna came a little later. Seeking Shri Krishna asleep, he sat down at Shri Krishna's feet. They both waited for Shri Krishna to wake.

When Shri Krishna opened His eyes, His gaze alighted on Arjuna. Narayana! Bhagwan's gaze alights first on the *vinayee* (people who have humility). What do you want, Arjuna? He asked.

'I came before Arjuna did,' said Duryodhan.

'You may have come before Arjuna, but I saw him first, before I saw you,' replied Shri Krishna. 'Besides, Arjuna is younger than you. Therefore, he should be allowed to make the first choice.'

Then Shri Krishna told Arjuna, 'Look. I will be alone and unarmed, on one side. On the other side, will be vast Yadav Army with fully armed warriors. Which do you choose?'

Arjuna did not hesitate for a moment. 'I want only You!' he said. 'Even if You don't take up arms, please stay with me.'

Duryodhan was elated to hear Arjuna choose Shri Krishna, because he had got the vast Yadav Army, without even asking for it. Arjuna was delighted to get Shri Krishna, because he wanted only Shri Krishna.

Shortly before the war, Arjuna asked Shri Krishna, 'You will be without weapons, isn't it?'

'Yes. I will be alone and unarmed.'

‘The please be my *saarathi* (driver). Please drive my chariot.’

Arjuna handed over the charge of the chariot of his body, the horses of his *indreeya* (five sense organs and five organs of action), and the reins of his *mana* (emotional) mind, to the sarathi of his *buddhi* (intellect), Shri Krishna. Shri Krishna is the *adhishtaataa* (governor; ruler), *antaryaami* (who abides in the heart), and is the *pre`raka* (one who inspires) of all.

Arjuna chose only Shri Krishna. He wanted neither the Army nor the warriors. He only wanted Shri Krishna. The *aashraya* (refuge), the one who inspires, the one who guides us towards our goal should be Shri Krishna only.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

A Real Experience.

There was a highly evolved Mahatma who had been living on the bank of the Narmada for forty years. He lived alone, wore no clothes, and practiced Yoga. A bright line had formed on his forehead, starting from the Brahmarandhra (the center of energy on the crown of the head) to the Agnachakra (the center of energy between the eyebrows).

I had gone to meet him. 'Maharaj,' I pleaded, 'please make me *samarpita* (surrendered completely) to Bhagwan.'

The Mahatma smiled. 'Guru!' he asked, 'what is it that is not already in Bhagwan's *sharana* (refuge; protected by Him)? Think about this deeply. Nothing exists, but the light of the Ishwara. It is His effulgence that gives light to everything. Everything shines in His light. It is He who shows, and it is He who is seen. He is the *upaadaana* (substance; matter) of which everything is made, and He is the *upade`ya* (object).

All right, Guru, go now; think about what is not in Bhagwan's sharan, and is not controlled by Him. You can come back in four hours, or two hours, or tomorrow, or any day in the next one month; but think about this before coming.'

I bowed at his feet with deep respect and left. I began to ponder on the things he had said. 'When the *prithivee* (earth) belongs to Bhagwan, all the gold, silver, jewels etc also belong to Him. Everything that grows on this earth is His. This gross physical body of mine, which I consider to be mine, is made of food, so this, too, belongs to Him. Why do I consider it to be mine? My house is also His. What about the clay in the money? That is His, too. Nothing is mine; everything is His.'

After a while, new thoughts started coming. ‘Even water belongs to Bhagwan. The owner of water is the owner of blood. All greenery is also Bhagwan’s; all juice is His. It is His juice that is in the sour lime and in the sweet mango. Why do I consider them mine?’

Very well. Fire, too, is His; so is brightness. When light – and everything made of light – belongs to Bhagwan, who does temperature belong to? Of course, to Bhagwan!

To say that the wind belongs to Bhagwan but my breath belongs to me is not tenable. When the wind is His, the air I breathe is also His.

If space belongs to Bhagwan, what about the empty space in my nostrils and in the cave of my mouth? They are His; so are the pores of my skin. The Surya (sun) is His, the Chandrama (moon) is His, the entire Creation – the individual and the whole – all belong to Him. I am nothing, and nothing is mine. To think, “I-I-I” and “mine-mine-mine”, is nothing but *agnaana* (lack of Gnan; ignorance). “I” and “mine” are nothing but a false ego. The ego caused by agnan deludes the *buddhi* (intellect) into believing “me” and “mine” to be real. The real life is to be *nir-aham* (free of ego) and *nir-mama* (feeling of being the owner).’

I went back to the Mahatma the next day. After bowing down with deep reverence, I sat down close by his feet. He looked at me with love and gestured to ask how I felt. I also looked at him with love, and smiled. Then he said laughingly, ‘Well, Guru! Did you discover anything?’

‘Maharaj,’ I replied, ‘even after pondering long and deep, I can find nothing that does not belong to Bhagwan. I thought methodically about the *pancha-bhoota* (five elements: earth, water, sun, wind and space),

and all that is made of them. But I could not think of a single object that is not ruled or protected by the Ishwara. There is no individual object, nor the entire Creation, that is not in His sharan.'

The expression on the Mahatma's face and the look in his eyes showed that he was pleased with my answer. His eyes showered Grace on me. He spoke gravely. 'My child, it is agnan to think, "I do not belong to the Ishwara," or, "I am not in the Ishwara's sharan." It is a delusion to think that you are not surrendered to Him or protected by Him. The fact is, you are not to go into His sharan; you are to remove the agnan about the Ishwara's sharan. You are to dispel the feeling that you are yet to take refuge in Him. You merely have to correct the false impression that you haven't given yourself to Him.

My son, sharan is not an action. It is not that you fold your hands and that becomes taking His sharan. "Sharan" is not a word you utter, and become dedicated. Sharan is not a feeling that you hold on to, for you to become His.

You see, sharan is not any action, or spoken word, or resolve, or feeling. Sharan is a *tattva* (essence; fundamental truth). It is the Gnan of what is. Sharan is the understanding, the realization, of the Satya (that, which cannot be negated). My child, *sharanaagati* (to take refuge in Bhagwan) is a real experience.

Very well; go now, and experience this Satya for yourself.'

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Sharan.

The word 'sharan' (refuge) is made from the root *shru hinsaayaam*. The special feature in this is that it destroys everything, even itself. Only the Brahman remains.

Mein mara jaauon, tu prabhu jeeve`.

(Let me die Prabhu; only You live.)

This sounds very harsh, doesn't it? Understand it from a different viewpoint.

It is Bhagwan who exists in all forms. A bhakta's perception should be such that he sees Bhagwan in everything. Everything except Bhagwan should be negated. Everything else dies (loses its individual existence). When only Bhagwan remains, it is called 'sharan'.

We see in the Gita that 'sharan' is one of Bhagwan's many names.

Gatirbhartaa prabhuh saakshee nivaasah sharam suhrit,

prabhavah pralayah sthaanam nidhaanam beejamavyayam.

(I am the *gati* [bestower of spiritual progress] *bhartaa* [provider], *prabhuh* [Master], *saakshee* [witness], *nivaasa* [abode], *sharanam* [refuge], *suhrit* [well-wisher], *prabhavah* [beginning], *pralayah* [end], *sthaanam* [substratum], *nidhaanam* [preserver during Dissolution], *beejam ayvayam* [the endless seed of all Creation].)

This shloka has Bhagwan's names from all the different Sects. Twelve of His qualities are mentioned in it; you can count them for yourself.

Bhagwan says that He is the actual sharan of all. In the Gita, the word 'sharan' has been used as meaning Bhagwan Himself. Bhagwan is our sharan.

The Amar Kosha (Sanskrit Dictionary) says, '*sharanam griharakshitroh*' – the *griha* (house) and *rakshaka* (protector) are called 'sharan'. The house in which we live is called sharan, and the Prabhu who is our protector is also called sharan. If the house and Prabhu are separate, it reduces the value of the protector; the protector then becomes merely a bodyguard. If 'I' am the owner of the house and the protector is some other, the protector will be of secondary importance. Where the abode and protector are one, its importance is enhanced. When our abode is also our protector, it is called sharan.

Intelligent people take the sharan of their *buddhi* (intellect).

Buddhau sharanamanvichha kripanaa falahe`tavah. (Gita)

The Paramatma abides in the buddhi as the *antaryaami* (the one who abides in the heat). He sits in the intellect and guides.

Dhiyo yo nah prachodayaat (Vedas).

The Paramatma's effulgence is present in our buddhi.

Aatmabuddhiprakaasham (Upanishad).

The buddhi is the light of the Atma.

When someone comes to you for advice, you should say, 'Bhagwan has given you buddhi – think about the matter from all angles, and then do what seems best.' You should not impose your buddhi on him. You should advise him to think it out.

Look at it this way – a student went to his teacher to ask for the answer of a mathematical problem. The teacher told him the answer. Now, tell me, did this benefit the student or did it harm him? By merely giving the solution, the child learnt only the answer to one problem. Had the teacher taught him the method for working out the sum, he would have learnt how to come to the right conclusion. That would have been truly beneficial.

These days, the situation is such that people listen to an hour's discourse and sum it up in a minute. They come to me after a talk and say 'Swamiji, the conclusion of today's talk was, wasn't it?' My brother, it is not enough to know the conclusion; one must also understand the process by which this conclusion was reached. The logic must also be understood. When a person studies the process of the reasoning, his thinking is channeled towards the logical method for establishing the principle. In the principle of Vedanta, this stream of thought is also in the Guru's sharan. '*Nirantam chintan*' – a continuous flow of thought is the form of this sharan. However, there is something lacking even in this. Do you know what? The sharan of our buddhi is yet to be taken.

A disciple's *sharanaagati* (taking refuge; total surrender) in his Guru is total when he says –

Naanyat kinchit vijaanaami tvame`va sharanam mama.

(O Gurudev! My buddhi is stupefied. The edge of the sword is blunt. All my efforts are at a standstill. I have no refuge but you. I am in your sharan. You are my only refuge.)

Unless and until the *jeeva* (an individual; the Atma attached to a body) says, '*Tame`va sharanam mama* – You are my only sharan', the Ishwara doesn't say, '*Maame`kam sharanam vraja* – take refuge in Me alone.'

When there is no other support except Bhagwan, Bhagwan's *kripaa* (Grace) showers on the bhakta. When a bhakta takes refuge in Bhagwan alone, and no other, he gets Bhagwan's *prasaada* (blessing). And, when Bhagwan accepts the bhakta's sharanagati, the bhakta's *moha* (delusion) disappears. He obtains an unbroken awareness of *tattva-gnaana* (the knowledge about the essence of the Brahman; enlightenment). No doubt remains in his mind. He spends his life doing whatever Bhagwan prompts him to do. The life of a bhakta becomes a mere instrument for carrying out Bhagwan's wishes. His life is filled with only Bhagwan; there is no fear of *a-mangala* (anything inauspicious). It is a journey filled with enthusiasm, and it is Bhagwan who prompts bhakti, sustains it, and gives him its fruits. Laxmiji (the goddess of prosperity and Grace) always stays there. A bhakta's life is victorious and glorious, and always ethical. When a bhakta's sharanagati is total, his life contains everything that is auspicious, happiness, and peace.

Now I will tell you something about myself. If anyone comes to my sharan, I find out about his *ananyataa* (depending on no other but me). I tell him, 'I suggest that you think over this from all angles, and then decide what is best. Think it out for yourself. Understand the pros and cons, and then make a responsible decision.'

This is '*Buddhau sharanamanvichhata*' – taking the sharan of the *buddhi* (intellect).

Then, if he tells me, ‘Maharaj, my buddhi is not functioning; I can’t understand what I should do,’ I tell him, ‘Look. A very wise person lives here. I suggest you go and take his advice.’ What is this? This is “*Tame`va sharanam gachha*” – go into the sharan of that *antaryaamee* (one who abides in all hearts). He is the one who stays in your heart, and in your intellect, and inspires you – inspires everybody – to do what is right.’

Sometimes, even after saying all this, the man is not convinced. If he says, ‘Maharaj! I have no other *aashraya* (refuge) except you. I have come to your sharan. I don’t want to go to anyone else, leave alone ask for their advice. For me, you are my one and only sharan.’ If that happens, I say, ‘Oh! Is that the case? You have come to me with a feeling of *ananya sharanagati*. Don’t be despondent or disheartened. Don’t be depressed any more. Remain happy and free of worries. I will immediately turn your worries to ashes. Go and relax; be at ease. Now you have nothing to fear and nothing to worry about.’

This is ‘*Maame`kam sharanam vraja* – come into only My sharan.’

The fact is that the Ishwara’s power of *kripaa-anugraha* (Grace and blessings) manifest fully only when a person’s dependence is solely on Bhagwan. It is only when a bhakta depends totally on the Ishwara that he gets the personal experience of how the Ishwara showers Grace constantly.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Who Is Eligible For Ishwara-Sharanagati?

I will tell you something that may sound a bit shocking, but this is how Fakirs talk. You are all refined people; you may not like the idea of a Sadhu being offensive, but I will tell you an incident about a Fakir, who was a *siddha purusha* (having supernatural powers). I was staying with him when this incident took place. People came to him in large numbers, to get his blessings or some *varadaana* (boon).

Once, a lady came, accompanied by other ladies and her family members. She bowed down to the Mahatma. Then she folded her hands and said, 'Maharaj! Bless me with a child! Let me get a son. Let a *baala gopaala* (baby Krishna) play in my courtyard. Please Grace me with the *sukha* (happiness and comfort) of having a child.'

Hearing her words the Mahatma turned to me and said, 'Give this woman two slaps and push her out of here.' I was stunned to hear this. I could not understand what wrong the woman had done. She had only bowed down to the Mahatma and asked to be blessed with a son. What made the Mahatma blind to her *bhakti-bhaava* (feeling of bhakti) and tell me to send her off? Why was he so harsh with this lady?

Narayana! The Mahatma was a siddha purush with Inner vision. Seeing my confusion he told me, 'This woman is not worthy of Grace. At night she goes to other men, asking them to give her a child; and in the day she goes to Mahatmas, asking to bless her with a son. She is an immoral woman, with no real bhakti. Send her off at once.'

Narayana! Did you observe the point of the Mahatma's offensive behavior? *Ananya-gati* (the single-minded dependence on the Ishwara) is essential for the Ishwara's *sharanaagati* (taking refuge in the

Ishwara). You should never feel that anyone apart from the Ishwara will protect you. You should not expect support from anyone, or depend on anyone, apart from Him to give you what you need.

Lift up both hands in surrender. When Draupadi gave up trying to hold on to her sari to save herself from being disrobed in public – when she raised up both hands in utter helplessness – and called out to Krishna in desperation, He became her sari instantly, and saved her from shame. How can a person who takes the sharan (refuge) of Shri Krishna's lotus feet be disgraced? A *sharanaagata* (one who takes refuge in Bhagwan) can never be disgraced. Draupadi kept calling out, 'Krishna! Krishna!' but He did not come as long as she depended on her own strength. Then, she raised both hands in complete surrender, saying, 'Krishna! You are my only refuge now! If You want me to be disrobed publicly, so be it!' Krishna instantly became the sari wrapped round her, and saved her from shame.

*Jaba lyon gaja bala apano baratyo, ne`ka sayro nahim kaama,
nirabala hoya balaraama pukaaryo, aaye`aadhe`naam.*

(As long as the elephant Gajendra depended on his own strength to break free from the jaws of the crocodile, he did not succeed. As soon as he realized that he was powerless to save himself, he called out helplessly, 'Govind!' and Bhagwan appeared before he had even completed uttering Govind's name!)

We should depend only on Bhagwan. If a man has confidence that the Raja, Seth (wealthy businessman), Police, or any other, will save him, how can it be sharanagati? You see, a person is eligible for sharanagati only when he surrenders completely to Bhagwan, and only Bhagwan.

No one who depends on worldly power is eligible for Ishwara sharanagati.

A person who wants to be a sharanagata should not seek anyone else's sharan. Nor should he allow himself to be anyone's sharan. It is not that he puts one hand in the Ishwara's hand, and holds on to his child with his other hand. Then he says, 'O Ishwara! You please protect me and I will protect my child.' It is not that he keeps his gold and money carefully in his waist band, and says, 'O Ishwara! Please protect me and also protect my wealth.' Such an attitude is an obstacle in sharanagati. A person who wants to take Bhagwan's sharan has to be *akinchana* (a beggar). No feeling of 'mine' should remain in him. He should feel, 'Nothing is mine, and You are my only support.' Only when a person feels this way is he eligible for Ishwara sharanagati.

The third point is, there should be no tardiness. '*Vilambaakshama*.' A person should not feel, 'There is no particular urgency about taking Bhagwan's sharan. I can do it next month, or even after two or three months.' There should be no delay in starting on the path to the Ishwara. One should start as soon as the urge rises. A person is eligible for Ishwara sharanagati when even one moment's delay becomes a burden.

Narayana! Three factors are essential in the eligibility of being a sharanagata. *Ananyagati* (depending solely on Bhagwan), *akinchana bhaava* (a feeling of having nothing), and *tatparataa-vyaakulataa* (feeling anguish if there is any delay). If a person feels, 'I will attain Mukti (liberation from the cycle of rebirth) through Gnan, Yoga, Bhakti, Dharma, etc', or is confident of his own ability to protect his

possessions, or if he lacks the urge to walk on the path to the Ishwara, he cannot be eligible for Ishwara-bhajan.

You see, sharanagati has this mantra, that the person places no dependence on being protected by Dharma. Generally, our life has very little Dharma and a great deal of *a-dharma* (that, which is contrary to Dharma). We shouldn't feel that Gnan will give us bhakti, because Gnan has not been obtained yet. We don't even have bhakti for Bhagwan's lotus feet. We have no support at all, apart from Bhagwan.

We should have a feeling of being utterly helpless and destitute. 'O Sharan! O *sharanaagata-vatsala* (one who has motherly love for anyone who takes His sharan)! O Prabhu! I take the sharan of Your lotus feet! *Shree raamachandra-charanam sharanam prapadye`.*'

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Why Do We Need The Ishwara?

Narayana! It is a point worth keeping in mind that there is not a single person in this world who is free of *dosha* (faults). A person who can't see his own faults is either so stupid that he does not understand what a dosha is, or else he is so wicked that he is aware of his faults, but tries to hide them. All the *sthaavara-jangama* (unmoving-moving) objects in this world have doshas. There are doshas in Brahmaji, because of which one of his five heads was cut off. There are doshas in Vishnu, because of which he had to sit on Vrinda's *chitaa* (funeral pyre) and rub dust on His body. There are doshas in Shankarji, because of which he had to wander from place to place carrying the Devi's corpse. All these stories are given in the Puranas.

It is not possible that any being that is born can be completely *nir-dosha* (free of doshas). A little bit of Maya (the Ishwara's power of delusion) is attached to all beings, whether they are *de`vataa* (demi-gods; presiding deities) or *daanava* (a class of demons). From the viewpoint of Vedanta, even the Ishwara is the Ishwara because of Maya's *upaadhee* (a superimposition connected to something). If there was no Maya in the Ishwara, He would not have the attributes of the Ishwara; He would be the non-dual Brahman without attributes.

It is not possible that your life becomes completely free of faults, and therefore, you have to endure the *dukha* (suffering) that is the fruit of your doshas. The affix 'p' is made from the root 'paa'. It means that which nobody can escape from. Nobody can avoid the dukha that is the fruit of a papa (sin); it always has to be borne – *avashyame`va bhoktavyam*. This is the Constitution of Dharma. Is there any higher authority who can overrule the rules of the Constitution of Dharma?

Yes, there is. The Ishwara's rule is higher than the rules of the Constitution of Dharma.

Narayana! It is true that the Ishwara exists, but do you have *aasthaa* (faith) in Him? If you have no faith in the Ishwara, you will go on weeping and grieving. There will be no one to free you from your papa.

It is a fact that a human being does not have the capacity to give up papa altogether. This is the helplessness of a human being. People incur sin even in the ritual of *praayashchitta* (atonement).

Then?

We need someone who can free us from papa, and the only one who has this capacity is the Ishwara. Yes! Any person who thinks he can be *nish-paapa* (without papa) without becoming one with the Paramatma is living under a delusion. He is mistaken. He lacks understanding. He is called a *paakhandee* (wicked person), a *dhongee* (hypocrite). Nobody can be nishpaapa without becoming one with the Paramatma. Therefore, a human being should accept that there are doshas in him, and also that he lacks the capacity to become completely free of papa.

When you sit before a Mahapurusha with your legs spread out, you never realize that this is an *aparaadha* (offence). When you sit before a *shishta-purusha* (venerable person) and chat among yourselves, you don't realize that this is an insult to him. Only a very few intelligent people hear the whisper, 'This is not proper.' When you can't even recognize which of your actions are paapas, how can you avoid doing them? The only one who has the capacity to free you from your paapas is the Paramatma. So, it is essential to take sharan (refuge) in Him.

Look! You have done Dharma, and you can also give it up. Paapa have been done since time immemorial. They have been done knowingly and unknowingly. You can't even let go of them. It is human nature to remember even the smallest good deed, and put a curtain of forgetfulness over the wrong deeds we have done. A person forgets his sins and gets angry if he is reminded of them. He is sullied by his misdeeds, but can't cleanse himself of them. Narayana! This is something that must be understood – it not possible for a small child to cleanse himself; he needs a mother's love.

A mother makes her child sit in warm water and scrubs soap on him to wash away the dirt on his body. She cannot bear to let him stay dirty. I saw soap only after I grew up! Soap was not allowed into our house; white clay was used instead. We used white clay when we bathed. Our clothes were washed with white clay. Even clothes that came from the *dhobi* (washer-man) were sprinkled with Ganga-jala (water from the Gangaji) before being used. My mother scrubbed *ubtana* (an herbal paste) on my body and then washed it off. At times the water would be cold and at times it would be hot. I laughed sometimes and cried sometimes, but my mother gave me a thorough bath whether I laughed or cried. She would not let any part of my body remain dirty. This is motherliness; this is a mother's love.

Narayana! I told you about this at some length so that you notice the same principle in your life. '*Nirdosham hi samam brahm*'. No one with a physical body can be fully nirdosha (free of faults). Sitaji, who is the primordial Mother, told Hanumanji, 'There is nobody in this world who has never done something that was wrong.' Sitaji did wrong when she spoke harsh words to Laxmanji. Many pregnant women had an

abortion when Hanumanji set fire to Lanka. Thus, everyone is a *doshi* (wrongdoer), an *aparaadhee* (offender), and eligible for punishment.

Then, is there no one who can show mercy and save us from being punished?

Sita-Rama! This is a point worth keeping in mind. Paapa is present in all. Every one also fears papa, and this fear is also a cause of *dukha* (sorrow) for them. We need somebody who can free us from paapa, from fear, and from dukha.

Sri Krishna thumps His chest and declares, 'That is Me! I will free you from all sin. I will dispel your *agnaana* (lack of Gnan about the Atma and the Brahman being one and non-dual). I will remove all your *vaasanaa* (desires that lead to wrong-doing). I will destroy your *abhimaana* (pride), *raga-dve'sha* (attachment-aversion), and *abhinive'sha* (identification with the body that leads to fear of death). This is My responsibility. All you have to do is to come to Me.'

'Maame`kam sharan vraja. Aham tvaa sarvapaape`bhyo mokshayisyaami maa shuchah.'

My brother, do you now understand why there is a need for the Ishwara in the life of a human being?

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

I Never Reject Anyone Who Comes Into My Sharan.

Sharanaagati (taking refuge in Bhagwan) is done with the *bala* (strength) of Bhagwan. In this, the *bala* of the *jeeva* (an individual; the Atma attached to a body) is our *nirbalataa* (lack of strength; helplessness). In sharanagati Bhagwan does not bother about the background or the eligibility of the one who takes His sharan (refuge). He is not bothered about who the sharanagata (one who takes sharan) is, where he has come from, or what he did before he came. Bhagwan doesn't see the paapa of any person who seeks refuge in Him; nor does He consider his past. Even the greatest of sinners is eligible for *bhagvat-sharanaagati* (taking refuge in Bhagwan) – '*api che`tsuduraachaaro*'. A jeeva's paapa may result in his getting born as a dog or a pig, but he remains eligible for sharanagati. '*Ye`pi syuh paapayonayah*'. Shri Madhusudan Saraswati has interpreted *paapayonyah* (a lowly form that is given because of sinful deeds), as any species, like a vulture or some other, that is considered lowly by people. He says that Bhagwan will not reject even a vulture who takes sharan in Him. It is not a matter of the person's deeds, or of his *praarabdha* (fate caused by past deeds).

When even a person with a bad prarabdha, or a lowly species, is eligible for sharanagati, there is no question of anyone being ineligible! All have the right to take refuge in Bhagwan. One only needs to bow before Him and ask.

Sanmukha hoyi jeeva mohi jabahin,

janma koti agha naasahim tabahin.

Koti vipra vadha laagahin tabahoo,

aayahu sharana tajahaun nahin taahoo.

(When a jeeva turns to Me, the sins of thousands of past lives are destroyed. I will never reject a sharanagata even if he has killed many Brahmins.)

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

The Ishwara Is Absolutely Real.

That, which you can't leave even if you want to, is the *avinaashee* (indestructible), *adviteeya* (non-dual) *aatma-tattva* (the essence that is the Atma). It is the Ishwara. He is everywhere, at all times, and in all forms. He is *gnaana-svaroop*a (the form of Gnan). He is the Anand-Tattva (the essence that is pure bliss). The Shastras call Him the Ishwara.

When people get irritated with the word 'Ishwara', it is because they don't know the correct meaning of the word. If they once understand what the word means, they will understand that the Ishwara is what everybody actually wants!

The Ishwara is the actual *ishta* (desired object) of every being. In fact, even an atheist desires the Ishwara, but is not aware that what he really wants is none other than the Ishwara. The Ishwara is not just an emotion or an imagined object; He is absolutely *tthosa* (real)!

A *saadhaka* (spiritual seeker) can obtain the Ishwara's darshan (see a revered object) whatever state he may be in. This entire Creation is Vrindavan. Everything belonging to the feminine gender is Radha, and everything belonging to the masculine gender is Krishna. Wherever you look on the vast stage of this world, it is all the divine frolic of Radha-Krishna. It is the union of the two Masters – whether you establish them with love or with thought, establish the Ishwara in your heart. He is absolutely real!

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

The Heer Of Wood.

I will tell you about my childhood days. Carpenters often worked at our house, making ploughs from the wood of the babool tree, or furniture from wood of the sheesham tree. I used to watch them work. The wood would be cut away, layer by layer, and right at the centre of the trunk there was the heer, an extremely hard and solid layer of wood. Do you know what that heer is? It is the heart of the wood; it is the *heeraa* (diamond) of the tree.

In the Gita, Shri Krishna tells Arjuna, '*Eeshvarah sarvabhootaanaam hridde`she`rjuna tishthati.*' The Ishwara stays in the *hridaya* (heart) of all beings.

I used to think, 'Since a tree also has a heart, or heer, the Ishwara will also be in the wood.'

When the outer layers of name and form are stripped away, like layers of wood, we reach the innermost substance, and that is the Ishwara. Even the *che`tanaa* (consciousness) in lice and bedbugs is the Ishwara, once the name, form and action of the being are put aside. It is the Ishwara who exists even in the grass, trees, and shrubs, hidden by the name, form and action. Once you look beyond the name, form and action of any object, you will find that the Sat (pure existence that can never be refuted) in it is the Ishwara.

Eeshvarah sarvabhootaanaam hridde`sherjuna tishthati.

The Ishwara abides in the heart of all beings, and all objects, animate and inanimate, sensate and insensate. *Bhavanti iti bhootaanisarvaani te`shaam sarvabhootaanaam'* – whatever is, is the Ishwara. *Astibhavati* – everything is the Ishwara. He abides in all hearts. He is here,

He is now, and He is as He is. *Tishthati* – He neither comes from anywhere nor does He go anywhere. He neither expands nor does He contract. There is no such thing as movement in Him, because He is all-pervading. The changes and mutations in objects are because of the Ishwara's presence. The Ishwara is established as He is, everywhere. He is omnipresent.

The pure existence that remains when the superficial layers of name, form and action are removed is the Ishwara. Investigate that Ishwara in your heart. Know Him. Recognize Him. It is He who abides in your heart. Take *sharan* (shelter) in Him, along with all your thoughts and feelings. Our heart is the most precious treasure of all. The Ishwara lives in it. Meet the Ishwara in the solitude of your innermost subtle being, and experience joy; only joy!

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Samarpan.

There are no rules for *samarpana* (dedicating to Bhagwan) about what should be offered up – millions, gold, silver, diamonds, pearls or other valuable offerings. You can offer Bhagwan just a leaf, a flower, a fruit or a little water. It is not necessary that the leaf should be a tulsi leaf (considered sacred by devotees of Vishnu) or a bel leaf (considered sacred by devotees of Shiva).

People of the Sindhi community had come over from Pakistan at the time of the Partition. They had nothing to offer, so they would pluck a leaf from any roadside shrub when they came to meet me. It did not matter that the leaf was of no use whatever; they placed it before me to keep the decorum of not going empty-handed to a Sadhu. Sometimes, they brought a little water. ‘Maharaj, this is Jamuna jala (water of the Jamuna).’

This is called ‘vastu samarpan’ – offering an object. In this, the condition is that we should make some offering with bhakti.

Viduraji’s wife went on offering banana peels to Shri Krishna, without realizing that she was discarding the bananas she should offer, and offering the peels she should discard! Shri Krishna ate the peels with great love. The importance is not of the object offered; it is in the feeling with which it is offered.

Patram pushpam falam toyam yo me` bhaktyaa prayachhati,

tadaham bhaktyupahritamashnaami prayataatmanah.

(Gita 9.26)

(If any bhakta offers Me even a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or a little water with bhakti in his heart, I manifest and accept it with love.)

The *samarpana* (offering) of an object is an external offering, but samarpan is not limited to external objects. It goes deeper. We should say, '*Shreekrishnaarpanamastu*' (I dedicate this to Shri Krishna), when the action is done. When we sit down to eat, we should say, '*Shri Krishnarpanamastu*' before starting. All Yagna (sacrificial offerings), *daana* (charity), and *tapa* (asceticism) should be dedicated to Bhagwan. This is also a kind of samarpan. Dharmic rituals like the *havan* (oblations offered into the sacred fire) are for the Devtas (presiding deities and demi-gods). The Dharma of daan is for human beings, and tapa is for purifying the *antahkarana* (fourfold mind; the subtle body). All these should be offered up to Bhagwan.

*Yatkaroshi yadashnaasi yajjuhoshi dadaasi yat,
yattapasyasi kaunte`ya tatkurushva madarpanam.*

(Gita 9. 27)

(Offer up to Me, everything you do and eat, the oblations you offer, what you give in charity and the austerities you do.)

Samarpan is not only of *karma* (actions), Dharma, or *aatma-shuddhi* (purifying the subtle body); the entire *mana* (emotional mind) and *buddi* (intellect) are dedicated to Bhagwan. '*Mayye`va mana aadhatsva*' means samarpan of the mana. '*Mayi buddhim nive`shaya*' means samarpan of the buddhi. '*Adhatsva*' and '*nive`shaya*' both mean dedicating or offering up.

Our mana is attached to our gross and subtle body – we should attach it to Bhagwan. Our buddhi should also be attached to Him. That will be the samarpan of the mana and buddhi. Actually, the mind and the intellect are both given by Bhagwan. Since everything belongs to Him anyway:

Te`raa tujhako saunpate` kyaa laagata hai more.

(What does it cost me, to give You what is already Yours?)

When you dedicate everything to Bhagwan, you will become free of the good and bad fruits of your karmas. Your *sannyasa* (renunciation) will be absolute. You will become liberated, and merge into Bhagwan. This is Samarpan-Yoga. It is a part of bhakti.

Shubhaashubhafalaire`vam mokshase` karmabandhanaih.

(You will be liberated from the good and bad fruits of your actions.)

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Bhagwan's Grace To Bali.

The Grace Bhagwan showered on Raja Bali was greater than the Grace He showered on anyone else. Bali offered up his *loka* (this world), and his *paraloka* (the realms after death earned through good deeds). Bhagwan said, 'You have not yet fulfilled your pledge of giving Me three foot-lengths, Bali! Give Me everything that belongs to Me. Why are you making an incomplete offering?'

Bali had not realized that there would be anything left to be offered up to Bhagwan, even after giving Him everything he possessed. He did not understand what was left for him to offer.

It was Garudaji (the eagle on whom Bhagwan rides, who symbolizes the Word)'s binding him that made Bali understand. Bhagwan told Garudaji to tie up Bali with a rope, since he was unable to rise above the Word of the Vedas.

The Vedas contain many passages that state that Bhagwan's two foot-lengths covered everything in this cosmos. Bali was still bound by the *shabda-brahm* (the Brahman who manifests as the Vedas), after he had given up this world and the next. He was tied up by Garudaji in the form of the *shabda* (word). He was still bound by his feeling of being a separate individual.

Bhagwan rebuked Bali sharply. 'You are not fulfilling your promise to give Me three foot-lengths, as measured by My feet!' Now Bali understood what Bhagwan meant. '*Padam triteeyam kuru sheershim me` nijam* (place Your third foot on my head),' he said. This was offering up himself, his feeling of being a separate individual, his subtle ego, the feeling that he was the giver.

The Vedas describe the four *pada* (feet, supports) of the Ishwara in this world. One is the gross physical world, the second is the subtle world, the third is the subtle ego of individuality, and the fourth is the pure Brahman. The fourth *pada* is beyond interaction; it is the Atma, it is non-dual, and it is not separate from the Brahman who is the substratum of everything, free of form and attributes. The third *pada* is where the consciousness of individuality remains. Bhagwan put His foot on Bali's head.

Bali said, 'The *kripaa* (Grace) Bhagwan showered on me is unparalleled. He has never showered such Grace on any other. He placed His foot on my head. I did not offer myself; it was He who put His foot on my head and accepted me. See Bali's beautiful style of speaking – '*Alabdhapoorvopasade`sure`rpitah.*'

Bali did *samarpana* (dedicated himself), but Bhagwan's compassion was such that He forcibly gave this samarpan the form of *sharanaagati* (taking refuge in Bhagwan; total surrender to Bhagwan). You see, it is one thing when a *sharanaagata* (one who takes refuge in Bhagwan) comes to Bhagwan, but it is an altogether different matter when Bhagwan goes to a sharanagat!

It is not that Bhagwan went to Bali to fulfill Aditi's wish and give the throne of Swarga back to Indra. The fact is that Bhagwan wanted to make sure that a great *dharmaatmaa* (one who adheres to Dharma) should not get trapped in the insignificant things of this world.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Who Is A Bhakta?

Who, actually, is a bhakta? What are the characteristics of a bhakta?

The characteristic of a bhakta is that he ties Bhagwan's feet with the rope of his *pre`ma* (pure love).

Very well; does a bhakta's prema have the capacity to tie Bhagwan's lotus feet?

Oh, no, my brother! Bhagwan Himself Graces the bhakta by sitting in his *hridaya* (heart). Bhagwan is so merciful that He never leaves the hriday of His bhakta. If someone takes Bhagwan's name even under some compulsion, all his *paapa* (sins) are destroyed. '*Visrijati hridayam na yasya saakshaat hariravasaadavihitaudhanaashad.*'

Thus, one point is that the bhakta is so greedy for Bhagwan's lotus feet that he binds them with his love, and keeps them in his heart. The other point is that Bhagwan is so greedy for His bhakta's bhakti that He never leaves the heart of His bhakta. This love of Bhagwan and His bhakta is reciprocal.

The Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapurana describes how Bhagwan, Himself, manifested in Maharaj Prithu's Yagna, and was worshipped by everyone there. He encouraged Prithu to become friends with Indra. Then, when He placed His foot on Garudaji (the eagle on whom Bhagwan rides), preparing to leave, tears poured from Prithu's eyes at the thought of Bhagwan leaving him. Prithu caught His feet. It was like catching the feet of someone who is about to get on to a horse. Bhagwan stood there for hours, with His hand on Garudaji's back. '*Anugraha-vilambitah.*' – He Graced Prithu by delaying His departure.

You all know:

*Pranayarasanayaa dhritaanghri-padmah sabhavati
bhaagavatapradhaanoktah. (Bhagwat 11. 2. 55)*

Thus, a bhakta is one who has such intense prema for Bhagwan's lotus feet that he refuses to let go of them. A bhakta uses the rope of prema to tie Bhagwan's feet and hold them in his heart. And, Bhagwan is one who showers so much Grace on His bhakta that He does not remove His feet from his bhakta's heart.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Sakama-Nishkama Bhakti.

In Bhakti, Bhagwan is the primary *kartaa* (doer of the action) and the *jeeva* (an individual; the Atma attached to a body) is the secondary karta. Bhagwan is the *niyojaka* (organizer) and the jeeva is the *niyojya* (the one appointed to do the work). The jeeva does what Bhagwan appoints him to do.

In Bhakti, Bhagwan is the *prayojaka* (instigator), and the bhakta is the *prayogya* (requisite). Bhagwan guides the bhakta and the bhakta acts according to His guidance.

Bhagwan does not guide just anyone; He sees the past karmas and present karmas of the person. He also sees what is in the *antahkarana* (fourfold mind; subtle body) of the person. He examines where the bhakta's *aashraya* (refuge) is, and where his *preeti* (love; attachment) is. Bhagwan prompts His bhakta accordingly, after examining all these minutely.

You can understand it this way – there is a clerk who works honestly for his employer and gets a salary. He uses the salary to provide for his family. The employer is his ashraya, but his preeti is for his wife and children. The ashraya is separate and the preeti is separate. This is called '*sakama bhakti*' (bhakti that is done to fulfill a desire).

The 'Kala Vilas' has an excellent introduction regarding this. There is a woman who shows great devotion to a Raja. She succeeds in pleasing him with her loving service. Then she tells him, 'Maharaj, my lover has been put into prison. Please have compassion and have him released.' This is also sakama bhakti. The Raja is her ashraya and her preeti is for her lover.

Let us consider a student of Vedanta. The student is a *sharanaagata* (one who takes refuge) of his Sadguru (enlightened Guru), and he desires Mukti (liberation from the cycle of rebirth). The Sadguru is his ashraya, but his preeti is for Mukti. This is also sakama bhakti.

The Upanishad says, ‘Yo *brahmanam vidadhaati poorvam.....mumukshurvai sharanamaham prapadyate`.*’ In this, both the words ‘sharan’ and ‘prapatti’ are used to indicate taking refuge in the Guru. The meaning is, ‘I have come to you, and I desire Mukti.’ The disciple takes the sharan (refuge) of the Sadguru to fulfill his desire to be free of the prison of this world. This, too, is sakama bhakti.

In *nishkaama bhakti* (bhakti that has no worldly desires) the ashraya and the preeti are one. There is no division of one being the ashraya and another being the object of preeti. The goal, ‘*Maiyaasaktamanaah, and madaashraya* – preeti for Me and My ashraya’ – the preeti and the refuge are one. This is nishkama bhakti.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Pranava Japa

The *japa* (ritual chanting of a mantra or Bhagwan's name) of the Pranava (Oum) is done to obtain the Grace of the Paramatma. It is also done to get the fruits of instituted Dharma. People who want to be free of this world and experience Samadhi (a state of deep meditation where there is no awareness of the external world) are also told to do the Pranava japa that leads to the mind being immersed in the Atma. The Pranava has three syllables – A-U-M. The A merges into the U, and then into the M sound. The M sound fades into the *tureeya* (the silent experience of the non-dual Brahman without form or attributes, and is the substratum of everything).

The four levels of the Supreme are represented by the syllables A-U-M and the fourth, the silent Tureeya. These are the Vishwa-Virat (the gross physical world), the Taijas-Hiranyagarbha (individual and universal consciousness) and the Pragnya-Ishwara (the intellect that controls the individual and the whole), which merge into the Tureeya. The japa of the Pranava is particularly helpful when someone wants to enter into the rhythm that leads to Samadhi.

Even a Grihastha (married householder) can do the japa of the Pranava. There is no bar to his uttering 'Om', but it should be attached to another mantra, like *Hari Om*, *Om namah shivaya*, *Om namo bhagavate`vaasude`vaayah*, etc. A worldly person is forbidden to do the japa of only the Pranava. Shri Hari, Bhagwan Shiva, Bhagwan Vasudev – they are all in the *kaarya varga* (the category of the effect) whereas the ultimate form of the Pranava is the *kaarana varga* (the category of the cause). This should always be kept in mind.

A person who wants to be liberated from this world should do the Pranava-japa, and those who care about this world should do the japa of the Pranava attached to another mantra. I am not connecting any caste or strata of society to this. Caste is imbedded so firmly in people's minds that one should teach Dharma with the thought that everyone is a Shudra (the labor class; the fourth and lowest strata of the ancient social order). If a person becomes a Vaishya (trader class, the third strata) or a Kshtriya (a warrior class, the second strata), or a Brahmin (a learned, pious person, the highest strata) by his own efforts I accept them as such. It is excellent if he rises, else we should encourage people to uplift themselves gradually. If I want to recommend a *saadhanaa* (method for spiritual progress) I will start with the simplest and easiest method – that of chanting Bhagwan's name; *naama japa*.

These days, people are used to a lifestyle where they eat what they want and drink what they want. There is no discipline in what they eat and drink. They lose the habit of drinking water if they go abroad. They give up all restrictions about their food and drink. Is it not so? Very well; let us proceed. They dance with those they should not dance with. They even dance naked! No ethical framework restricts their lack of propriety. Decorum and dignity are vanishing rapidly. Under the circumstances, if anyone wants to do *saadhana* (effort for spiritual progress) they should start with the japa of the name of Rama. It is a great thing to start doing sadhan-bhajan with Bhagwan's name.

If anyone advises you to eat what you want, drink what you want, say what you wish, and do whatever you feel like, he is showing you the path to go to Narak (Hell). He is not your well-wisher; he is your enemy. Yes!

Look- your *indreeya* (senses) should be restrained and regulated. Your lifestyle should be such as is approved by Dharma. Your mind should be filled with good-will for all. Your intellect should be illuminated by Vedanta, and your heart should be filled with *pre`ma* (pure love) for Bhagwan. Your *aham* (subtle ego) should be *nir-aham* (free of pride). Go on doing things that will please Rama. Revel in the Atma-Rama – the Atma that is not separate from Rama.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

The Gayatri Mantra.

‘*Gaayantam traayate*’ – the japa (ritual chanting) of that, which protects you from *kaama* (desire), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *bhaya* (fear), and *mrityu* (death) is called ‘Gayatri’. ‘*Mananaat traayate*’ – the *manana* (meditating on) of which gives us *traana* (deliverance), and guides us to good fortune, is called a mantra. ‘Gayatri’ contains ‘tra’ and ‘mantra’ also contains ‘tra’. Therefore, the Gayatri is the principal mantra.

Om bhurbhuvah svah tatsaviturvare`nyam bhargo de`vasya dheemahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayaat.

A mantra establishes a connection between the person who chants it and the *adhidaiva jagata* (the subtle world of divine forces). ‘*Adhidaivasambandhasthaapako mantrah.*’ Just as there is a broadcasting station of radio waves, there is a broadcasting station of mantras. The invisible lines are present. The broadcasting station of a mantra is the *hridaya* (heart). Lines exist in the heart for uttering a mantra, and we get connected to the divine powers as soon as we say the mantra.

Look, a *yagnashaalaa* (place where a Yagna is held) is like a building in which the broadcasting is done. The Punditji sits in it and begins the broadcast. The mantras connect us to the Adhidaivik realms. There, Indra, Varuna, Agni, Mitra, and other Devtas (presiding deities of unseen powers) receive our prayers. They have the radio, you know! They absorb the words we speak, and store them. Yes! Our prayer is bound to be heard sooner or later.

The power of sound is particularly strong in mantras. It is not enough to read the meaning of mantras in a book where the translation is given. The fact is, the communication with the Devtas must be conducted in the correct language, or else, a translator will be needed, isn't it? If you want to communicate directly with the Devtas, you will have to use their language.

Mantras contain immense power. I have seen the power of the Sabar Mantra myself. The Apasthambadi Dharmasutra states, '*Mantraayurve`davit cha pramaanam*' – mantras are forms of proof. They have been seen. The mantra for reducing the effect of a snake bite or scorpion bite reduce the venom immediately. If anyone reads out the mantra, the effect is immediately evident. The *mantra-shakti* (power of the mantra) is its proof.

If the mantras are spoken correctly, using the right intonations etc, they can be heard. If they are indistinct or incorrect they can create adverse reactions. It is like sending a broadcast to Russia that is intercepted by Pakistan. Tell me – will the broadcast be clear? It will become garbled and can even have a disastrous effect. Therefore the *japa* (ritual chanting) of a mantra should be done with *pavitrataa* (purity according to the Shastras), and in keeping with our qualification and eligibility.

When you say the mantra correctly, with *shraddhaa* (faith), you will immediately get the benefit. There are some mantras that can be chanted even if you don't know their meaning. For example, those who chant the Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra – '*Oum haun joon sah*' don't put in any effort to understand what this means; they just utter the words. Similarly, there are *beej akshara* (seed syllables) that result in bhakti sprouting in your heart.

All of you know the kind of toys available in the market these days. A single clap activates a battery operated car or musical toy. You clap again and the toy stops. Is it not so? Yes! A gentleman showed me a toy bus that started moving when anyone said, 'Go', and stopped when anyone said, 'Stop'. What is this? It is the power of the word, whether you know it or not, whether you believe it or not. You are free to accept or reject this, but the power of sound is infinite. The word you say strikes your brain, and activates the machinery in it. When you utter the words it triggers off a process in your heart. The affect of mantra-japa is to purify and energize the *mana* (emotional mind) and *buddhi* (intellect).

This is an age of electronics. I see cordless telephones in many homes. What is this? What is radio communication? It is the power of sound. These days, rockets are sent to outer space, controlled from the earth. This is also done through *shabda-shakti* (sound-power). Therefore, please keep in mind that this power is inherent in mantras, and it is not to be disdained. Mantra-japa should be done with deep faith. When our shraddha and the Devta's *anugraha* (Grace) combine, the results are wonderful.

Narayana! You ask, 'Who made the Gayatri Mantra?'

Does everything have to be made by someone? Who made the sky? The one who created the sky created the Gayatri Mantra. Now, you can search who that was!

Very well; now – there is a sound. The syllables *pa*, *fa*, *ba* and *bha* are made when we compress our lips. The syllables *ka*, *kha*, *ga*, and *gha* come from the throat. This is called '*aupaadhika bhe`da*' – a difference that is superimposed on sound. There is sound in Creation, and we

create differences in it through the superimpositions of our organs of speech.

Yes, it may be stated that Vishwamitra is believed to be the Rishi (Seer) of the Gayatri Mantra. It is, indeed, Vishwamitra. 'Vishwa' means the whole world, and 'mitra' means friend. Vishwamitra had universal benevolence, and that manifested as the Gayatri Mantra.

The fact is that the Gayatri Mantra has always existed. Vishwamitra saw it and gave it its form as the Gayatri Mantra. People who have the ability to focus their mind are able to see the mantras of the Vedas. The Mantras of the Vedas are not written by any human or Devta (presiding deity or demi-god).

It does not seem appropriate to talk about *chamatkaara* (supernatural phenomenon; miracles) in the twentieth century. There was a lady in Kashi (Varanasi), called 'Siddha Mata' (Siddha means having supernatural powers and Mata means mother). A disciple of mine used to stay at her Ashram. He was called Rishi Kumar. When Siddha Mata did the *japa* (ritual chanting) of a mantra, the words of the mantra would rise up on her skin. Yes! They could be seen on her hand, chest and back. One could actually read the words. A mantra creates internal vibrations, and these manifested on Siddha Mata's body.

Chanting a mantra effects the blood circulation as well as the movement of the body winds. This affects both the body and the mind. Thus, mantras are not created by any person. The Rishis see the mantras that are scattered in Space; they do not create the Mantras. They are the Seers who see the Mantras.

Astronomers discover new stars and planets, and give them names. There is a star called 'Gandhi'. People call it the Mahatma Gandhi star. A star is usually given the name of the person who discovers it. Similarly, the mantras are given the name of the Seer in whose heart they first manifest. The Rishis of the mantras are Vishwamitra, Vasishtha, Mitravarun, and others. These Rishis do not create the mantras; they see the mantras that exist. The Gayatri Mantra was seen by Vishwamitra.

Narayana! What I wish to clarify is that the Gayatri Mantra was made by Him, who has made Space and created sound in Space. The mantra existed before it manifested in the heart of Vishwamitra, and he saw the mantra in the Space of his heart. In keeping with the universal benevolence in his heart, Vishwamitra revealed the Mantra for the benefit of the world.

Now, let us see the benefit of chanting this Mantra. You ask, 'What is the benefit of chanting the Gayatri Mantra?' Is this not a commercial viewpoint?

Hathi Babaji was sitting with me one day, when a gentleman asked, 'Maharaj, what is the benefit of chanting "Rama, Rama"?' He was a Marwari (a predominantly traders' community). He had addressed the question to me, but Baba commented, 'Is he a Baniya (trader)?'

'Yes, Maharaj,' I replied. 'He is a typical Marwari.'

My brother, let there be at least one or two activities in your life that are not motivated by material gain! Allow the Gayatri Mantra to remain beyond the range of commercial considerations! Let the ritual of Sandhya Vandan not be weighed by worldly profits. Yes! Devote five

minutes every day for doing this ritual. Do it as a duty, without thinking of what you can get out of it. There should be some duties in your daily life that are done with a *nishkaama bhaava* (without expecting any return). My brother, you are wanting to destroy *nishkaamataa* (absence of selfishness).

It is also true that the japa of the Gayatri Mantra bestows *kaamanaa-poorti* (fulfillment of desires). I can tell you the name of the *grantha* (book), if you want to read it. The 'Katyayana Sutra' is given in a book called 'Yajurvedhan Sukta', which is available in the market. It has been published by Shridhar Shastri Bapte of Nasik. The method of doing a ritual of the Gayatri Mantra is given in this book. It explains which method should be used for the fulfillment of which desire. There are some japa that are to be done standing in water, and some that are to be done in front of a fire. Some are done in front of a *deepaka* (oil lamp), and some are done mentally. There is even a method of doing japa with the words reversed! There are sections called 'Gayatri Upanishad', 'Gayatri Hriday', 'Gayatri Saar', etc that explain how japa should be done for achieving different purposes.

'Pancharatron' has a section called 'Ahirbudhnya Samhita' that explains how different weapons were made using the letters of the Gayatri Mantra. The Brahmastra, Brahmashirostra, Meghastra, Vayavyastra, Parvatastra etc were created (using the powers of the elements) by using syllables of the Gayatri Mantra. Each syllable of the Gayatri – *tat sa vi tu* – has a different meter and different Devta (presiding deity). By changing the order of the letters the sages could achieve the fulfillment of different purposes.

Narayana! My advice to you is that you do this favor to the Gayatri Mantra – don't commercialize it! Chant it with the feeling that you are fulfilling your duty, without expecting any worldly benefit in return. Gayatri is your Mother. It is asking, 'What is the benefit of giving my Mother food to eat?' Yes! You call the Gayatri your Mother and then say, 'Mother, I am giving you food; please make the payment of one month's bills.' Narayana! This is not something that needs to be told. The japa of the Gayatri Mantra is, in itself, the greatest benefit. Chant the Gayatri Mantra – that will be the greatest good you can do for yourself.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Satsang And Bhajan.

People often ask, 'Maharaj, which is superior – Satsang (spiritual discourses) or Bhajan (singing devotional songs; meditating lovingly on Bhagwan)?'

Tell me now, what am I to say? You see, it is like this – Satsang and Bhajan are supplementary. Doing Satsang increases the urge for doing Bhajan, and doing Bhajan helps to understand the essence of the Satsang. Therefore, both Satsang and Bhajan should be a part of your life. This is the straightforward answer.

This shloka is from the Vishnu Purana:

*Svaadhyaayaat yogamaaseeta yogaat svaadhyaayamaane`t,
svaadhyaayayogasampratyaaat paramaatmaa prakaashate`.*

(Be established in Yoga – bhakti – by doing svadhyay – studying the Shastras – and understand the Shastras by practicing Yoga. When svadhyay and Yoga are combined the Paramatma is seen.)

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

What You Say Is True.

Two disciples came to a Mahatma with a dispute. One said, 'My colleague is always doing *vichaara* (giving deep thought, meditating on spiritual matters) – what does that achieve?'

'What you say is true,' said the Mahatma. 'Vichara is a *vikshe`pa* (disturbance). You should let go of vichara and make your mind completely still.'

The other disciple said, 'Please listen to my reasoning. My colleague only talks about Samadhi (a state of deep meditation when the mind is blank), but when he emerges from the Samadhi, his identification with his *de`ha* (gross physical body) remains unchanged. The Samadhi does not cut away his feeling of being a separate individual. It is only by doing vichara that this subtle ego of individuality – the Aham – is removed. Therefore a person who focuses only on Samadhi is an *agnaanee* (one who lacks Gnan).'

'What you say is true,' said the Mahatma. '*Manana* (giving deep thought to the Vedic principle) cuts away *sanshaya* (doubts and dilemmas), and *nididhyaasana* (bringing the mind back repeatedly to the object) removes *viparyaya* (faulty thinking). Therefore, both manan and nididhyasan should be present in your life.'

Both disciples asked, 'Maharaj, how can we both be right?'

'What you say is true,' replied the Mahatma with a smile. 'A person whose vichara has achieved its purpose should have a mind that is completely at peace. A person whose agnan is not dispelled should do vichara. Samadhi does not dispel agnan.'

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Sadhuta Is Needed.

Isn't a Sadhu (Monk) a burden on society? What need is there for anyone to leave his home and take Sanyas, in order to obtain *aatmabodha* (knowledge of the Atma)?

You see, if a person develops *pre`ma* (love) for *chintana* (profound thought about metaphysical matters), and becomes introspective, loving solitude, and getting engrossed in meditation, his chintan can yield gems, provided he becomes free of worldly concerns. If a person becomes *antar-mukhi* (turning his mind inwards) his *sat-sankalpa* (resolve for the Satya and good of all) can bring good fortune to the whole world. Hence, it is the duty of society to arrange for his safety and sustenance. If society considers those who do chintan and *dhyaana* (meditation) and introspection to be a burden, then we can say nothing about the future of that society. We have to revert to these words:

Jahaan sumati tahaan sampati naanaa,

jahaan kumati tahaan bipati nidhaanaa.

(Prosperity flourishes where the thinking is right; problems flourish where the thinking is faulty.)

May the Ishwara give *sanmati* (right thinking) to all. May Bhagwan bestow good fortune to all.

Very well; pay attention to this – there are lots of schemes for creating awareness about family planning. Aren't the Sadhus exempt from adding to the burden of overpopulation? They thus reduce the Government's burden. They don't ask the Government for land, for housing, or financial assistance for business. They sustain themselves

on food begged from the homes where cooking is done, and spend their days meditating on the Paramatma. Their thoughts are focused on that, which benefits the whole world. They have reduced the burden of your worries, and are ready to remove the anxieties about the future.

Why do you consider them to be a burden?

Narayana! '*Fikara faanki fankanee kare` taaso naama fakir. Alamasta fakeeraa, raham allaha.*' (A Fakir is one who blows away all worries. He is always happy because he depends on the mercy of the Almighty.)

A Sadhu is *be`khvaaisha* (free of desires), *be`fikra* (free of worries), and *be`paravaaha* (free of cares). The point is, who do you consider to be a Sadhu? Do you gauge a Sadhu by his garb, necklace, or *tilaka* (mark on the forehead)? Look – I respect the garb of a Sadhu. I have no reservations about the robes a Monk wears. However, *sadhutaa* (the characteristics of a Sadhu) does not lie in his external appearance.

I ask you to read the Gita carefully, from the beginning to end. You will not find any description of a Sadhu's dress, or the kind of *maalaa* (necklace) he should wear – tulsi beads or rudraksha beads or crystal beads, gold, silver, diamonds or pearls! Nor is there any mention of what kind of tilak a Sadhu should have – vertical, horizontal, or round; or what kind of *chandan* (Sandalwood paste) he should use for his tilak. None of these are mentioned in the Gita.

Narayana! I have great respect for the garb of a Sadhu; a Sadhu helps people to turn inwards and meditate on the Paramatma. However, your impression – that society will be benefited only by long lectures and hard labor – is absolutely mistaken. A true Sadhu benefits the world even without giving discourses or undertaking any labor. The *sat-*

sankalpa (resolve for the good of all) that rises in the heart of a Sadhu spreads over the entire world, permeating it with benevolence. It is a fact that this world, and society, are supported by the benevolent *sankalpa* of true Mahatmas. The pure lifestyle of a true Sadhu gives a lofty ideal to society.

Narayana! It is the life of a Sadhu that guides people away from wickedness and wrongdoing, accumulation and hoarding, hatred and violence, faults and wrong tendencies. A fearless Jeevanmukta (enlightened) Sadhu who is totally free of all doubts and dualities, stands in-between the wealthy and the very poor. He tells the rich, 'My brother, you do so many wrong things in order to make money. You cause distress to so many, in order to accumulate wealth. Look! I have nothing, and yet I am supremely happy. Can your wealth and possessions give you the *sukha* (happiness and content) that I possess, even though I possess nothing? *Sukha* does not lie in wealth; it is the *svaroopa* (true form; essence) of the Atma that is *sukha-swarup*. Try to obtain an experience of the Atma that is *sukha-swarup*.'

To the poor, the Sadhu says, 'My possession-less brother! Magnificence is an artificial wealth; contentment is the natural wealth. Don't be sad. Continue to do your ordained duties. Look; I have no wealth and no possessions. I have neither land nor property, and no means for indulging in comforts and luxuries. Yet I am *sukhi*. I am *sukha-swarup*. I have the inner knowledge that I am the Emperor of Emperors, the King of Kings, the Monarch of Monarchs. A person is not poor because he has no money. My brother, a poor person is one who has unending desires. *Sa tu daridro, yasya trishnaa vishaalaa*. Be content. Be happy.'

Yathaa laabha santosha sadaa hee – a sukhi person is one who is content with what he gets.

Rookhee-sookhee khaaya ke` thandaa paanee peeve,

de`kha paraayee chooparee, naa tarasaave` jeeva.

Gau-dhana, gaja-dhana, baaji-dhana aura ratana-dhana khaana,

jaba aavai santosha-dhana, saba dhana dhoori samaana.

(A contented person is happy with whatever food gets, and cool water to drink. He does not yearn for the rich food of another. People measure wealth by the number of cows, elephants and horses they have, and their gems and jewels, but all these are like dust when the person gets the wealth of contentment.)

Narayana! The life of a Sadhu inspires the wealthy to give up hoarding wealth. It encourages the poor to be content with what they have. The Sadhu's life inspires both the rich and the poor to be happy. Why do you consider a Sadhu to be a burden on society? A Sadhu is not a burden on society – he is its support, inspiration, and ideal. The life of a Sadhu gives good fortune to society. A Sadhu's sankalpa is enough to bring progress, and uplift society. If you want the people to be uplifted, render service to the Sadhu. The Sadhu is needed. Yes! *Sadhutaa* (the quality of a Sadhu) is needed. That is all.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Sadhak Savadhana!

Any *saadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) who follows the five points given below will speedily achieve success.

1. Rendering service with the body – doing work.
2. Restraining the senses – adhering to self-imposed disciplines.
3. Having universal benevolence – wanting the good of all.
4. Using *buddhi* (the intellect) with *vive`ka* (discrimination) – discriminating between the true and the false.
5. An absence of the subtle ego of individuality – to remain free of vanity and pride.

Two things are necessary for a sadhak's life to be successful and fulfilled. They are *pavitrataa* (purity according to the Shastras) and *gareebee* (poverty). Pavitrata means an absence of *kaama* (desires), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *moha* (deluded thinking) and other faults; and also having *sadaachaara* (the right lifestyle), *sanyama* (self-control), *sadbhaava* (goodwill) etc.

Gareebi means to live with the minimum of requirements. Wealth should have no importance in the life of a sadhak. These two points bring a sadhak very close to the Ishwara.

A sadhak should practice his own *saadhanaa* (method for spiritual progress) from an early stage. All society is purified by the purification of the individual. A sadhak should have an inclination for solitude and renunciation. He should feel apprehensive about involving himself in Committees and Societies. As far as possible, he should keep away from all coteries so that he does not fall into the quagmire of factions, which retards spiritual progress. Even if he is forced to get involved in them he

should remain *anaasakta* (unattached; emotionally uninvolved) in them. He should render services to the best of his ability and rise above all relationships when he sits to do bhajan (meditate lovingly on Bhagwan). A sadhak should pay special attention to one point in his sadhana – *sambandhe`saavadhaana* – be watchful about relationships!

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

A Sadhak's Goal.

The *lakshya* (goal) of a *saadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) is *paramaarth* (the Supreme benefit)! Therefore, a sadhak should fix his mind on his goal and not take an interest in the organizing of festivals or grand rituals. To obtain the Paramartha it is necessary to have *uparati* (lack of interest) for activity. Uparati means, to be free of any involvement in activities that entail worldly interaction.

Getting involved in Yagnas etc is not necessary for obtaining the Paramartha. Rituals like Yagnas are undertaken to obtain Swarga (Heaven). Events like grand Yagnas entail the involvement of many Brahmins who are given generous monetary and other gifts. If a sadhak gets involved in such activities, there will be no *jignaasaa* (desire for spiritual knowledge); nor will he be able to do *sharvana-manana* (listen to spiritual discourses and meditate on them) properly. A sadhak has no need to wander anywhere or do Yagnas and other rituals of worship, set up factories, or build up a business.

If a person gets involved in expanding his business he will not give thought to spiritual matters. An interest in business is an obstacle in meditating on the Paramartha. Lack of interest in worldly matters is helpful for meditation. Therefore, to reach his goal, a sadhak should be interested in making himself free of all worldly involvements.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

The Difference Between The Home And Outside.

There was a boy who started school. On the first day, his Guru taught, 'We should always have *dayaa* (compassion) for others. We should help those who are suffering.' When the boy went home, he saw his father was berating and driving away a beggar who pleaded for some food.

The second day, the Guru taught, 'It is a *paapa* (sin) to tell a lie.' The boy went home and saw his father telling lies to a visitor.

On the third day, the Guru taught, 'We should live amicably.' He went home and saw his parents quarreling, beating each other.

The boy did not go to school the following day. 'Why have you not gone to school?' asked his father.

'Guruji does not teach well. He teaches everything that is wrong. What is taught at school does not apply to the home. What is the use of learning things that are useless?'

Narayana! Make a note of this – the Sant-Mahatmas give the teachings of the Shastras. Is your life in keeping with what the Shastras teach? The Acharya-Guru's teachings are for the benefit of the people. Do you live a life according to their teaching? Are you sure that your behavior is not different from what is taught by the Gurus and Shastras?

Do *shravana* (listening with understanding) of the Shastras from your Guru. *Aachaara* (behavior) is everything. If the *achara* and *adhyayana* (what you have learnt) is the same, your life is beautiful indeed!

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

The Genuinely Eligible Person.

A gangster went to a roadside liquor shop and asked for one paisa worth of liquor. The shopkeeper ignored him, seeing that he was a drunkard.

‘Why aren’t you giving me one paisa worth of liquor?’ he demanded. ‘Didn’t you hear what I said?’

‘My good man,’ said the shopkeeper, ‘can one paisa worth of liquor have any effect on you? You can’t get intoxicated on one paisa worth of drink.’

‘Just give it,’ said the gangster. ‘Whether one paisa worth of drink intoxicates me or not is up to me.’ Hearing this, the shopkeeper poured a couple of drops of drink on the man’s palm. The gangster rubbed his nose and mouth with the drops of liquor, and felt intoxicated. Just imagining the effect of drink gave him a high. It was his faith in the power of drink that made him feel intoxicated.

In the same way, a person whose *buddhi* (intellect) is *saattvika* (inclined towards purity) quickly grasps the purport of spiritual talks, and achieves spiritual progress, whereas a person with lowly tendencies remains trapped in *moha* (deluded thinking) even if he strives all life long to elevate himself spiritually.

Yathaatathopadeshe`na kritaarthah sattvabuddhimaan,

aajeevamapi jignaasuh parastatra vimuhyati.

The genuinely eligible person develops staunch faith wherever he is, from whatever little teaching he gets. He does not bother about the source of the teachings, he merely grasps the points that strengthen his

faith and help his progress. He uses discrimination to separate the true from the false. He strengthens his faith by holding fast to the things that support his faith.

For a person who is genuinely eligible for obtaining Gnan, any individual or object can become a Guru for him, imparting the right teaching to him.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

What Advantage Will He Take?

A man felt suspicious. 'If I go to this Sadhu-Babaji, he will find some way of making me give him five rupees. It is better that I don't go to him.'

Look, it is not for you to decide whether the Babaji is genuine or not! It may be that the Babaji is, indeed, a cheat. Narayana! Anything is possible. Where is the difficulty?

However, the viewpoint of a *saadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) is not about what the Babaji is like. Here, the focus is on the sadhak. The sadhak became a *virakta* (one who gives up all worldly interests), he became a *jignaasu-mumukshu* (a seeker of the Truth – one who wants to escape from the cycle of rebirth). He became a Satsangi (one who associates with Mahatmas), and yet he fears losing five rupees if he goes for the Satsang (spiritual discourses) of a Babaji! Is it not so? This would be his thought process. Thinking on these lines does not reveal Babaji's greed; it reveals the *moha* (deluded thinking) of the sadhak.

If the Babaji's mentality is greedy, it is his business, isn't it? A sadhak should examine his own heart.

Examine your heart and check whether it contains moha or not. Does your heart have *lobha* (greed)? If the Babaji is Mukta (enlightened; liberated), if he has obtained the Paramatma, it is absolutely wrong to imagine that he has lobha-moha in his heart. The lobha-moha are in our own heart and we think they are in the heart of the other. That is all there is to the matter.

My brother, try to understand what this means. You are reluctant to part with five rupees! Now, tell me, how will you want to let go of the *sansara* (interactive world)? When you don't want to let go of this

sansara, why do you keep going to Sadhu-Babas to do Satsang, and ask questions about Brahmagnan? Is it not all a futile exercise?

Actually, this Kali Yuga (the age of Kali, filled with delusions and lowly tendencies) is rooted in impurities. It is due to the influence of the Kali Yuga that people's hearts are filled with desires and impurities. Nobody trusts anyone else. People are afraid to have *shraddhaa-vishvaasa* (faith and trust) in case they are deceived and cheated. Narayana! Someone relieves himself in a field, and the excreta becomes a fertilizer. He says, 'No, no! That is wrong. I won't go to anyone's field to relieve myself; I will go to a spot where there is no field.' My brother, you want to discard something, don't you? This world is worth discarding. This sansara is not something that is worth hoarding for your personal use.

Look, when a person has no feeling of *tyaaga* (renunciation), *dhairya* (courage), *aatmabala* (the courage of his convictions), he is unable to trust anyone. May Bhagwan protect us from people who are suspicious of everybody! It is good fortune for a Sadhu if suspicious people don't go to him. Only a person who has *tyaaga-vairaagya* (renunciation-detachment from worldly considerations) should go to a Sadhu, and he should also be enriched with the qualities of *dhairya* and *Atma-bala*. Narayana! People who lack the *Atma-bala* to endure some discomfort, lack the *vairagya* to do *tyaga*, lack a sincere desire for spiritual knowledge, or faith, are not eligible for Brahmagnan. They should avoid going to Sadhu-Babas. And, what will they get, even if they go? What benefit will they get?

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

A Statement Of Ahankara.

An adulteress was enjoying herself with her lover. Her husband was fast asleep in the adjoining room. While enjoying herself, the woman said to her lover, 'We are getting so much pleasure; why shouldn't my husband also share it? Shall I wake him up and ask him to join us?'

'Never think of such a thing!' exclaimed her lover. If you awaken your husband, he will kill both you and me!' This is an example.

Similarly, the Buddhi (intellect) is like a woman who frolics pleurably with Ahankara (the subtle ego of individuality), who is like her lover. The Buddhi's husband is the *paramaananda aatmaa* (the Atma that is supreme bliss; the Brahman). The Atma slumbers in the sleep of *aghaana* (lack of Gnan; ignorance). The Buddhi wants her husband to participate in pleasurable activities, but the Ahankara tells her to let him sleep on. 'If he awakens, neither you, nor I, nor this world, will remain alive.' When *avidyaa* (nescience; ignorance about the Atma being the non-dual Brahman) is removed, this world will no longer seem real or enjoyable.

*Ahankaaro dhiyam broote` - maa sushuptam prabodhaya,
utthite` paramaanande` na tvam naaham ne`dam jagat.*

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Old People Are Useful.

The *baaraata* (wedding party of the bridegroom) was to go to the village of the bride. A message came for the baraat, stipulating that only youngsters should come in the baraat; no elderly men should be present. The boy's family gave their consent.

The father of the bridegroom was an old man. He insisted on going with the baraat. He hid in one of the large baskets of fruits. The baraat was greeted with all courtesy when the bride's people saw that there were only young men in the bridegroom's party. Then, they sent another stipulation, 'We have a small stream running through our village. The wedding will take place only if you can fill this stream with milk instead of water.'

The youngsters were furious to hear this. They considered it an insult and prepared to return in a huff. 'What is the problem?' asked the groom's old father. When he was told of the new stipulation, he said, 'Don't worry. Send them a message saying that you agree to the stipulation, and will fill the stream with milk as soon as they empty all the water.'

The bride's family conceded defeat. They realized that some wise and experienced man was hidden in the bridegroom's party. The baraat returned triumphantly with the bride.

It is natural for problems to crop up, and old people are needed to advise and guide youngsters in dealing with them. Society needs old people who have experience and wisdom. They are like Gurus. Only when the *antahkarana* (fourfold mind) is absolutely Sattvik (pure and lofty) can a person's tendencies become *brahmaakaara* (the form of

the Brahman). This is the *kanyaa-paksha* (the relatives of the bride). The antahkaran cannot be *nir-vritti* (free of inclinations). Therefore, we should cultivate a Brahmakara vritti for the Mahavakya (the ultimate statement of the Vedas that establish the non-dual Brahman as the only Satya). This is the auspicious moment of marriage. This is the *vara-paksha* (the relatives of the bridegroom). ‘Empty the river’ is just a method.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

As The Bandhan, So The Mukti.

There was a potter. Every morning he would take his donkeys and go to the forest to collect clay for making his pots. He would tether the donkeys to stakes under a tree, while he ate and rested. Then he would load them and return home.

One day, he found he was short of one rope. He stood there, holding the donkey by the ear, wondering what to do. The donkey would wander off if it was not tied, and he could neither eat nor rest unless he tied the donkey.

A wise man was passing by. He saw that the potter looked perplexed, and asked what the problem was. The potter explained his dilemma. 'Take the donkey to the stake you tie it to every day, and pretend that you have a rope and are tethering it. It will stand there quietly, believing itself to be tied.'

The potter followed his advice. The donkey stood placidly while the potter ate and rested. When it was time to go back, the potter untied the other donkeys, but he did not untie this one, since it was not bound. However, the donkey refused to move, believing it was still tied. The potter tried his best to make the donkey start moving, but to no avail. The donkey kept moving from side to side. This was a fresh problem for the poor potter. He wondered if the passerby had put some magic spell on the donkey.

Just then the man passed by, returning from wherever he had gone. He saw the problem at once. 'My good man, pretend to untie the donkey just as you had pretended to tie it!' he said. 'It is a donkey and it thinks it is still bound. If it thinks you have untied it, it will start going forward.'

Make a note of this. Our Atma is *nitya* (eternal), *shuddha* (pristine), *buddha* (enlightened), and *mukta* (liberated). *Bandhan* (bondage) and Moksha (liberation) are superimpositions on the Atma, caused by *agnaana* (lack of Gnan about the Atma). That, which is caused by agnan is not real. Gnan gives Moksha. That, which is obtained by Gnan, already exists. The fact is, neither bondage nor liberation exist. The feelings, 'I am bound,' and 'I am free' are both due to agnan.

That is why Vedanta gives the clarion call that Gnan gives Mukti. Bandhan is caused by agnan; had the bandhan not been *aadhyaatmika* (metaphysical) it would not be removed by Gnan. The removal of the delusion of being bound is Mukti. Mukti is no separate object!

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

A New Insight Every Day.

I will tell you something about myself. I have studied the Gita extensively. Five or six of us would sit together, each with a different Master's commentary on the Gita. One had the Shankar Bhasya, one had the Shankaranandi, one had the Madhusudani, one had the Gnaneshwari, and one had Lokmanya Tilak's commentary. We would read and discuss the shlokas one by one, and compare what the Masters' comments on that shloka.

We would think about how the things written in the Gita would apply to us if we were a Brahmin. What is Bhagwan's command for a Brahmin? What is His command for a Kshatriya (the warrior class, second level of society)? What is His command for a Vaishya (the trader class, the third level of society) and what is His command for a Shudra (the labor class, the fourth level of society)?

Furthermore, what if we were an elephant, camel, horse, or donkey? We would reflect on '*karmanyē`vaadhikaaraste`* - your entitlement is restricted to the actions you do; not to the fruit of the actions (Gita 2. 47)'. So what if I am a donkey? I should not give up my work of carrying loads. I should do my work as long as I am able.

Then, we would identify with every state mentioned in the Gita, and study its message in depth. The Gita Bhagawati (goddess Gita) clarified the meanings according to our eligibility and competence. She continued to give us new insights and continues to give a new vision even now. Every day she gives me a new message!

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

How To Recognize Bhagwan's Speech.

The 'Bharadwaj Mimansa Darshan' and 'Angiras Mimansa Darshan' have raised the question: how can we be sure that these are Bhagwan's words? Some people say that Bhagwan has said this and some people say that Bhagwan has said that. Any person belonging to a particular school of thought or Sect says, 'Bhagwan has told us this', or 'that', or 'something else'.

Look - one way of recognizing Bhagwan's *vaanee* (speech, words, statements) is that it manifests Sat-Chit-Anand (Sat = pure existence, Chit = pure consciousness, Anand = pure bliss). Just as Bhagwan's *svaroopa* (essence, true form) is Sacchidananda, *ananta-jeevana* (endless existence), *ananta-gnaana* (infinite knowledge), and *ananta-aananda* (unending happiness), every part of His speech manifests Sat-Chit-Anand. Bhagwan is the form of Sacchidananda, and whatever He says will also be Sat-Chit-Anand.

I know some famous *vaktaa* (people who give discourses) who say, 'The quintessence of the Gita is, "*Karishye` vachanam tava* – I will obey You (18. 73)". When obedience to Bhagwan is total, the *sharanaagati* (taking refuge in Bhagwan) will be complete. Therefore, the message of the Gita is total sharanagati.'

Narayana! Such people want to restrict Bhagwan's words to a limited sphere. They want to limit His messages to narrow confines. Bhagwan's words are *aseema*, *ananta* (without limits, infinite). They are *udeerna-vyaapaka* (lofty – all-pervading). And, they are the form of the *adviteeya* (non-dual) Sat-Chit-Ananda.

The second characteristic of Bhagwan's speech is that it benefits all. It benefits the people who are Sattvaguni (having the lofty qualities of Sattva Guna), Rajoguni (having a mixture of lofty and lowly tendencies) and Tamoguni (having lowly tendencies). That, which lacks universal benevolence cannot be Bhagwan's speech. If the words indicate a partiality for just one group or Sect, it is neither Bhagwan's vani, nor His viewpoint. '*Sarvabhootahite` ratah (Gita 5. 25)*' – do that, which benefits all beings, is the message of the Gita, and therefore, the Gita is Bhagwan's vani.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Karma Yoga.

The Karma Yoga (yoking yourself to Bhagwan through your work) expounded in the Gita tells us to give up indolence. Don't waste your time in being lazy at home, or in idle chit-chat. Not a single moment of your life should be frittered away and not used for your work.

Go to the toilet so that you can concentrate on your work without the distraction of the urge to relieve yourself. Take a nap to refresh yourself in order to work more efficiently. Thus, the first point is, free yourself from idleness and indolence, and wasting time in futile activity. To free yourself from being useless is Mukti (liberation).

Now, think about the kind of work you should do. Save yourself from the wrong actions that are prompted by *kaama* (desire), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), and *moha* (deluded thinking). Let your actions be good ones. The characteristic of a good action is that it benefits the doer as well as others. For example, take farming. A farmer grows food that sustains him and sustains others. The crop he grows will provide for all his needs like clothes, a house, medicines, marriage, etc; and he will also be providing for others. This is a viewpoint for the good of all – his own good, and also of other people.

Similarly, people manufacture garments, cement, medicines, etc. They build charitable Guest Houses, Charitable Clinics, educational institutions, and other social services. If your focus is on the benefit of all when you do your work or business, it is good work. A shopkeeper will never be successful if he does not provide good quality products to his customers, wanting only to enhance his own profits. A customer will also be a failure if he does not pay a fair price for what he buys. Both deserve a fair deal.

Thus, see to it that you don't remain idle, and don't do things that are wrong. Don't work only for your own selfish interest. Work with the thought of other people's benefit, but don't develop the pride of being unselfish. *Karma* (actions) are done by the Ishwara's *kripaa* (Grace), and with His *shakti* (power). Offer up your actions to the Ishwara. The ability to work is given by Him, and it is He who inspires you to work. He is the Master. Just think – what is yours? What is in your control? Everything is being done; you merely have the ego of being the doer.

The earth supports everything, and she also moves. Water quenches the thirst of all. Fire gives heat and energy. The air gives life, and space gives the freedom for movement. The sun gives warmth and light. The moon gives soothing delight, and effulgence. All the functions in your body are done because of the favorable conditions of the whole creation.

You walk on the earth with your weight of some kilos. You would be as weightless as a scrap of paper if you went a mile or so into Space.

Under the circumstances, let go of your ego and surrender to the Paramatma. Let go of your individuality. The worldly feelings of *ahamtaa* (the subtle ego of 'I') and *mamataa* (the feeling of 'mine') are lowly beliefs. Rise above them. Don't fear Narak (Hell) and have no greed for Swarga (Heaven). Have no avid desire for any object, else you'll have to become that object. Hold on to your *svaroopa* (essence; true form).

Karma Yoga means that path to shanti (inner peace) which liberates you from all bondage. Look – first of all, place all your problems before Bhagwan. Consider well before doing your work. Never let go of *vichaara* (profound thought about spiritual matters). Lift yourself out of

idleness and merge into the work of the Paramatma. That means, get rid of any difference of opinion you may have with the Paramatma.

A wealthy businessman developed an enmity for Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehruji did not oppose him, but all the people in the Government opposed him, and he was destroyed. If you desire good fortune, attach your mind to the Parameshwara of this world. Give your assent to whatever He wants; don't have a difference of opinion with Him. Don't bang your head against a rock. Don't be a slave of your desires. Offer yourself up to Him like a leaf is offered in worship. Then see! You will get great good fortune, and only good fortune!

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Vishad Yoga.

What is the relevance of the *vishaada yoga* (yoking ourselves to Bhagwan through depression), described in the Gita? Come; let us try to understand this.

Look; you will surely be experiencing *vishaad* (depression; dejection) at least a couple of times every day. No being exists, who does not experience *dukha* (sorrow) after *sukha* (happiness), and *sukha* after *dukha*. The *vritti* (mental inclinations) of *sukha-dukha* arise and depart several times a day. Vishad is a part of everyone's life, but Yoga (being yoked to Bhagwan) is found in the lives of a very few.

Vishad Yoga means to place one's vishad before Bhagwan. When *dukha* comes to you, place it before Bhagwan. As soon as you get Bhagwan's *darshan* (see someone you revere) you will be reminded of Him, and your *dukha* will take on the form of Vishad Yoga. As long as you carry the burden of the *dukha*, it is vishad, but when you place it before Bhagwan it becomes Yoga.

If we interpret Yoga – Bhagwan's – in simple terms, Vishad Yoga means placing your problems before society. If there is a genuine difficulty in your heart – not just a personal dilemma – place it before society. It is the same as placing your difficulty before Bhagwan. When society sees that another person is the cause of your problem, it will remove the person and help you. For example, a thief is caught running down Kalbadevi Road, and people begin to beat him up. If he stands still, passers-by will feel sorry for him, and intervene.

Very well; place your vishad before the *viraata* (the Ishwara in the form of the whole world). If some tragedy occurs in your village, and your

heart is filled with sorrow, try to merge your vishad with the Virat, and see. Your sorrow will become absolutely small. Have you heard about Pompeii being destroyed by a volcano, or the eruption of a volcano in Columbia? Tens of thousands of people died. Things that seem very important become insignificant when seen from the viewpoint of the whole.

You feel upset if a mosquito bites you. Do you ever think of the conditions in which people live in forests, villages and mountains? When I was a child, people would burn neem leaves every evening, to keep mosquitoes away from their livestock. The smell of neem burning drove away the mosquitoes. We would smear mustard on our body to prevent mosquitoes from biting us. People who stay in air conditioned houses and sleep under mosquito nets get agitated by a single mosquito!

The fact is, it is the weakness of our mind that causes our sorrow. Monetary profit and loss, the meeting and separation with people, changing houses, etc do not give sorrow. Dukha is not external. It is mere imagination to think that going to a certain place will give sukha, and staying where you are is dukha. People feel that simple food is a cause of dukha and eating rich food is a cause of sukha. This is what people imagine. Simple food may not give immediate pleasure, but it is less likely to make a person unwell enough to go to a Doctor! When we wish to remove dukha by changing the circumstances, our focus is on that, which we imagine; it is not on the reality; it is not on Bhagwan, or the Atma, or the Paramatma.

Your feeling – that you can obtain sukha elsewhere – is absolutely a myth. There is no truth in the idea that sukha is not here; it is there. Or,

that Sukha is not now; it is then. Or, that sukha is not in this; it is in something else. It is sheer imagination to think that a wife with a dark complexion gives no sukha, only a wife with a fair complexion gives sukha. My brother, when you get a wife whose complexion is fair, she will enslave you!

Women feel that a husband who does not earn much will not give sukha; only a husband with a large income will give sukha. Sita-Rama! When you get a husband who has a large income, he will bully you. When you want to remove dukha and be *sukhi* (happy) by making changes in the world, your thinking lacks *vive`ka* (discrimination; discernment). If you want to be sukhi by changing your heart, there is no doubt that you will be sukhi. Change your heart, change your thinking; rid your mind of the thought of changing the outside world.

The meaning of Vishad Yoga is to surrender your sorrow to the Parameshwara who is all-pervading. Offer up all your woes to Bhagwan, who is the most Beloved. Just imagine – if you tell your Beloved, and He smiles at you, will your dukha remain?

This is called Vishad Yoga!–

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

The Utility of Yoga.

If you have the thought that you will be happy only if no dear one ever dies, you never lose money, fall ill, or face disdain, that is not proper. Friends and relatives will come into your life and depart. Finances will wax and wane. You will face ups and downs in life. At times you will get respect and there will be occasions when you are disdained. You cannot be happy if you depend on this world being favorable to you on all occasions. You have to learn the art of being happy. This art is called 'Yoga' (being yoked to Bhagwan).

When I was a little boy, I would run across the harvested fields of lentils. The cropped stumps are extremely sharp. They cut the feet if we step on them. I was careful to place my feet in the gaps between the stumps as I ran across without getting hurt.

Another popular activity was to see who could pass through the door posts that were freshly painted with tar, without getting tar on our clothes. My friends and I competed to see who could do this fifty times without touching the tar. In general, my clothes always remained free of tar marks.

Life is just like that game. There is an inner consciousness that is absolutely pure. It is an *ansha* (part) of Bhagwan. Whether you want to pass by the tar of *dukha* (sorrow) without letting it touch you, or whether you want to cross over the field of this world without letting the sharp stumps wound you, the dexterity on achieving this is called 'Yoga'.

Shri Raghunath Shiromani of Bengal was a renowned authority on the Nyaya Shastra. One day his mother told him, 'My son, bring me fire

from Sarvabhaumaji's house.' The five year old ran across, barefooted, to do his mother's bidding, and asked for a piece of burning coal. The servant was irritated. 'Have you brought any vessel to take it in?' he asked. 'How will you carry the burning coal? Will you take it on the palm of your hand?' He picked up a piece of coal with his pincers, and held it towards Raghunathji. The boy looked around. He saw some ash lying nearby. He placed a heap of ash on his palm and took the coal on it, and went back to his mother.

Sarvabhaumaji was watching. He went to the mother and said, 'Give this boy to me. I will have him educated.' The child became a highly learned, respected scholar. The child of five thought of a trick to save himself from getting burnt, but you have not learnt the trick of saving yourself from dukha. The art of retaining equanimity in the dualities of happiness and sorrow, success and failure, good and bad times, life and death, mental lethargy and brightness, Samadhi and disturbance, is called Yoga. This is the art by which you can remain untouched by dukha.

Yoga is to remain detached from being connected emotionally to dukha. The Gita calls this, '*dukhasanyoga viyoga*'.

Had Yoga been the name of the *viyoga* (separation) from dukha, it would mean that you are yoked to Bhagwan even when you are fast asleep, unconscious, or in a Samadhi. Or else, you would be in a state of Yoga when your enemy died, or your desire was fulfilled. But that is not the case. You have some suffering, but you have viyog from its *sanyoga* (uniting with the suffering). You have some illness, a dear one has departed, wealth and social prestige come and go; but none of these

have any impact on your inner self. Yoga is the name of the *vidyaa* (skill; art) by which your life remains untouched by dukha.

Do you know how to utilize this vidya, this skill, in your life? Please know about this Yoga. Learn it, understand it, and use it in your life. There are two main aspects of any cure. One is the removal of the malady and the other is maintaining good health. Similarly, there are two aspects in *purushaartha* (human endeavor, achievement) – removal of dukha and obtaining sukha. If you wish to be *sukhi* (happy) and retain your equanimity, the use of Yoga is definitely helpful. Therefore, Yoga is extremely important for anyone who wants to be happy.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Cultivate An Excellent Nature.

I know a child who has a habit of biting his nails. His nails start bleeding, but he can't stop himself from nibbling at them. He refuses to listen when he is told that he has to control this habit. If his mother applies bitter neem to his fingers, he washes it off at once. All kinds of efforts have been made, but the boy refuses to give up this habit.

Narayana! Similarly, once a person's nature is spoilt, it is not changed easily. The body, mind, actions and indulgences unknowingly develop into habits that need to be changed. Determination and perseverance are needed to let go of a bad nature, and hope and patience are needed to develop a good nature. It is extremely difficult for anyone to change his bad nature and become a good-natured person.

For example, a mosquito does not sit peacefully or allow others to sit peacefully. It bites people and harasses them. Similarly, it is the nature of some people to harass others. A bad nature can be that of talking, doing something, indulging in something, or accumulating things. The first step is to overcome these inclinations. Stop idle chatter, stop accumulating things you don't need, and stop indulging your senses. Cultivate a nature that gives comfort, peace, and pleasure to whoever you meet. When a person wants to hurt another, the hurt he inflicts comes back to him with interest. This is a hundred per cent certain.

Narayana! Develop the habit of thinking about how you can do good to others. As long as a person gives importance to his own *mana* (emotional mind) the *mana* of others becomes his enemy, and causes *dukha* (suffering) for him. To say something that gives *dukha* to another is prompted by *dusankalpa* (a bad intent). *Dusankalpa* hurts the *aashraya* (refuge; the person who harbors it). Hurtful speech rebounds

ultimately on the speaker, so improve your manner of speaking. Cultivate the habit of speaking with gravity and sweetness. Say things in a way that gives comfort, peace, and pleasure. Let your speech contain *hita* (the good of others), *kalyaana* (good fortune) and *mangala* (auspiciousness).

Bhadram bhadramiti brooyaad bhadramitye`va vaasanaa.

You should always speak only what is good and your mind should be filled with good thoughts.

The Gautama Sutra has this aphorism: *Abhadram bhadramiti brooyaat.*

Even when you speak about something that is sorrowful, speak in a way that comforts the other.

Look; the gross physical body is composed of the five elements – earth, water, fire, air and space. The subtle body is composed of *vaasanaa* (desires). The *antahkarana* (fourfold mind; the subtle body) is full of desires. The Gnan that is smothered with desires is called the *sookshma shareera*, or the subtle body. When auspicious desires prevail, it becomes *shuddha* (pure, according to the Shastras).

What you are to see is whether the brake of the vehicle of your life is in your hands or not. It is seen frequently that someone is told, ‘There is no need for you to give up your bad habits. I will teach you the technique of going into such a Samadhi, or make you meet the Ishwara, or attain *aatma-saakshaatkaara* (a direct personal experience of the Atma).’ A person is invariably attracted by such tempting offers. It requires great courage and resolution to break bad habits and wrong tendencies, and change a lowly nature to a lofty one. Only a person who walks on the *nivritti maagra* (the path of withdrawing from worldly

considerations) is able to attain a Samadhi or be established in his *svaroop*a (essence; true form).

Narayana! Unrestrained indulgences have always been available to all species! Why have you come into the field of *saadhana*a (effort for spiritual progress) if you wish to have the license to indulge every sensual impulse and attraction? Actions should not be done impulsively; they should be regulated by the *buddhi* (intellect that tells you what is right). Your life is not one of only sensual gratifications; it is a life of universal benevolence and love. Unless you restrain your lifestyle, you will be living like an animal and going towards your downfall. To lead a life that is appropriate for a lofty human being it is essential to cultivate an elevated nature.

Develop an elevated nature with all zeal, enthusiasm, hope, anticipation, and practice.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Right Understanding Is Needed First.

When I was young, I had gone to a Mahatma to do Satsang (spiritual discussions). He told me, 'If a *saadhanaa* (effort for spiritual progress) is done foolishly, it yields no results. The right understanding is the first requirement in sadhana.'

A man may know how to drive a car, but if he has no knowledge about the machinery, he will get stuck if the car stops functioning. Just as a person who understands the working of a car succeeds in reaching his destination, a person who understands the *rahasya* (secret; quintessence) of sadhana achieves success. It is vital to understand the working of the body, senses, *mana* (emotional mind) and *buddhi* (unbiased intellect). When work is done with knowledge and wisdom the resolve is fulfilled.

A Central Government officer from Maharashtra was sent to Punjab. His salary was considerably higher than the Punjab Government officer's. One Sardarji went to him and asked, 'Saheb! You are a human being and we are also human beings. Why should your salary be so much higher than ours?'

'The higher salary is not for the gross human body,' replied the officer. 'It is for the *buddhi* (intellect)'

'Saheb, what is so special about your buddhi?'

The officer thought for a moment. Then he placed his hand on the table and said, 'Sardarji, hit my hand with all your strength.'

Just as the Sardarji's hand was about to hit his, the officer removed his hand. The Sardarji cried out in pain as his hand crashed onto the table.

‘Sardarji, please pardon me, but I just wanted to make you understand that it is important to know when to act and when to withdraw. One should know when a hand should be extended and when it should be withdrawn. This is the work of the intellect. It is because I have this buddhi that I am given a higher salary.’

‘This is absolutely right, Saheb!’ said the Sardarji. ‘You are very intelligent.’

My brother, do your *sadhana-bhajana* (method used for spiritual progress-loving meditation of the Ishwara), and attain your goal successfully.

In the ‘Yoga Vasishtha’, Maharshi Vasishtha tells Shri Rama, ‘Shri Rama, worldly desires have been created from millions of past births. Therefore, they cannot be quieted unless a person practices *saadhanaa* (effort for spiritual progress) for a long time.

*Janmakotisamabhyastaa raama sansaaravaasanaa,
na chiraabhyaasayoge`na vine`yam shaamyati kvachit.*

Look; understand this well. There is one *sadhana* in which the Ishwara is predominant, one *sadhana* in which the *saadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) is predominant, and one *sadhana* in which the Ishwara and the *sadhak* are both important.

When the Ishwara’s *tat padaartha* (the ‘That’ factor in ‘Tattvamasi’ – the ultimate statement of the Vedas, showing the oneness of the Brahman and the Atma. *Tat* = That, the Brahman, *asi* = is *tvam* = you, the Atma) is predominant in *sadhana*, the rules and rituals are not needed for long. The Gita has several shlokas to confirm this.

*Ne`haabhikramanaashosti pratyavaayo na vidyate`,
svalpamapyasya dharmasya traayate` mahato bhayaat. (2. 40)*

Na hi kalyaanakrit kashchid durgati taata gachhati. (6.40)

No one who makes even the slightest effort to obtain Bhagwan is ever destroyed.

Bhaktas have said:

*Sandhyaavandana bhadramastu bhavato bho snaana tubhyam namoh
bho de`vaah pitarashcha tarpanavidhau naaham kshamah
kshamyataam, yatrakvaapi nishadya yaadavakulottansasya
kansadvishah smaaram smaaramadyam haraami tadalam manye`
kimany`na me`.*

‘O Sandhya Vandan (a ritual to be done daily), may you get good fortune. O *snaana* (daily bathing), I fold my hands to you for forgiveness. O Devtas (presiding deities) and Pitris (ancestors), I am incapable of doing *tarpana* (offering oblations). Please forgive me. I am destroying my *paapa* (sins) by sitting just anywhere, and thinking about the most excellent of Yadu’s lineage, Shri Krishna, the destroyer of Kansa. This is enough for me. What need have I for any other *saadhana* (method for spiritual progress)?’

One bhakta goes even further. He says:

*Aamnaayaabhyasanaanyaranyaruditam ve`davrataanyanvaham,
me`dashcche`dafalaani poortavishayah sarvam hutam bhasmani.*

‘If love for Bhagwan is not developed, the daily reciting of the Vedas is like weeping in a forest – it is futile. Fasts and rituals serve only to make

a person thin and weak, and rituals like Yagna-Havan (offerings made in the sacred fire) are like pouring oblations on ash.'

Narayana! In the sadhana of the Tat-padārtha (the 'That' factor in Tattvamasi; the Brahman) the Ishwara is the predominant factor. The Ishwara, Himself, catches the bhakta's hand and lifts him up.

In the practice of Yoga, the Tvam-padārtha (the 'you' factor, the Atma) is the predominant factor. The *jeeva* (Atma attached to a body; an individual) catches hold of the Ishwara and raises himself. The Atma is predominant in the tvam padārtha in this sadhana, and the bhakta needs to have complete *shraddha* (faith), complete *vidhi* (prescribed method), and full effort, to succeed. This sadhana should be done over a long period of time, with a feeling of reverence. This effort cannot succeed unless the sadhak has *paurusha* (determination and unflagging effort), complete *satkaara-bhaava* (feeling of reverence), and is undertaken over a long period of time.

These days, people do not proceed in the proper order of the sadhana. The proper order is that, which is prescribed by the Shastras, the Guru, and the *sampradaya* (spiritual tradition). They believe that the *saadhana* (method) of Vedanta is only the 'Tvam-padārtha'. Vedanta, however, negates the difference between the 'Tvam-padārtha' and the 'Tat-padārtha', and shows that the goal is the realization that they are one, non-dual, and the substratum of everything. Therefore, it is essential to understand the high level of the sadhana. Spiritual effort cannot succeed if there is a lack of the right understanding.

Now, *viveka* (discrimination between the true and the false) cannot be attained without Satsang (spiritual discourses); and Satsang is obtained by *eeshvara-kripaa* (the Grace of the Ishwara). Only by the Ishwara's

Grace can a person get the Satsang of a Mahatma, and Satsang gives rise to vivek in the *buddhi* (intellect). If you try to do any sadhana-bhajan without having Ishwara-vishvasa (faith in the Ishwara), Satsang, and right understanding, you will either mistake sleep for a Samadhi, or think a dream to be Bhagwan's kripa. Or else, you will mistake a coincidence for a miracle.

You should, therefore, first develop a proper understanding about sadhana-bhajan, and then immerse yourself wholeheartedly in your sadhana, with full faith that with Bhagwan's Grace you will definitely achieve your goal.

Narayana! A person's *sankalpa* (resolve) is achieved when he does sadhana-bhajan, and worships with the proper understanding that is given by the Grace of the Ishwara. Only then does a sadhak attain his goal. But, the first thing he needs is the proper understanding.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Let Go Of Desire.

In 1930 or 1932, I met a young man, and a strong bond of friendship formed between us. He told me, 'I will leave you if I get Bhagwan's darshan, or else I'll leave you if I get immersed in *dhyaana* (meditation). Otherwise, you will have to do what I say!'

Once, he sat in a cave in Kashi (Varanasi) and went on a fast. The news reached Shri Gaurishankar Goendka, one of Kashi's most learned Pundits. He came, himself, to the boy and tried his best to persuade him to give up fasting. He took the boy to his own house, and sent me a telegram to come to Kashi at once.

I reached Kashi and told the boy, 'You have three desires in your heart. If you give them up, something good is bound to happen.'

'I give up my desires,' he said.

Some ten or fifteen days later, he came to me and said, 'I had given up all three desires ten or fifteen days ago, but none have been fulfilled. Therefore, I am taking them back again.'

Shri Bhaiji (Shri Hanuman Prasad Poddar) came. He told the boy to do a particular *anushtaana* (ritual of worship, done to obtain a desired object). The boy did the anushtana for six months.

Narayana, when the boy said, 'I let go of my desires', did he truly let go of them? Had he actually been able to stop wanting the three things? People are deluded into believing, 'I desire nothing.' We should have a realistic understanding about our desires. We should give them the right direction. The flow of the Ganga cannot be stemmed, but can be

diverted. Unless the flow is guided to the right channel, the water will burst the dam, no matter how huge or strong the dam is.

A part of a mountain collapsed in 1916, blocking the Dhavali Ganga. Some days later the force of the water swept away the rock. It also swept away an island near Rishikesh, on which several Sadhus lived. The entire island was washed away.

In the same way, desires flow in the stream of nature. A person will never succeed if he tries to block desires forcibly. The desires have to be channeled towards the right path. There is the subtle ego of individuality. If you attach it to the *jada* (insensate), you will become *jada*. If you attach it to the *che`tana* (consciousness) Brahman, you will become *chetan*.

The flow of Prakriti (Nature) is connected to the work and activities of an individual. The *brahmasvaroopa* (the essence of the Brahman; the Atma) is free of actions and activities. Our *saadhanaa paddhati* (the method of our effort for spiritual progress) is the method of merging into the Brahmaswarup. For this, the method is that Sanyas and Yoga become one. Both have the principle of not depending on the *karma-fala* (the fruit of actions).

One person bows down to the Sun and prays, 'Surya Bhagwan, please illuminate my home.' His house is in a narrow lane. The sun rays don't reach there. When his prayers don't yield the desired result, he stops bowing down to Surya Bhagwan. The fact is that the fruit of doing *namaskaara* (bowing down) to the Sun that lights up the whole world is to have gratitude for everything Surya Bhagwan gives us.

Once, I was sitting at the bank of the Gangaji, at Swargashrama in Rishikesh. It was a moonlit night. A friend came and sat beside me. 'Swamiji,' he said, 'I have no *aasakti* (strong attachments for anyone in this world). I desire *aananda* (pure bliss). For this I am prepared to do anything you tell me. I will get married if you tell me to get married, and I will give up my body if you tell me to do that.'

'Are you in earnest?' I asked.

'Swamiji, I am in full earnest.'

'Then let go of your desire for anand also,' I told him.

'I let go of my desire for anand.'

Suddenly his whole body began to tremble. Tears rolled down his face. His body shone with ecstasy. He lost external consciousness, and became immersed in Samadhi. A little later, he regained awareness of the external world. 'I have understood what anand is,' he said.

Narayana! To let go of the *shuddha* (pristine), *buddha* (enlightened), *mukta* (free) *aatma-svaroop*a (the Atma's true form), and to desire the *apraapta* (un-obtained) *anaatma-vastu* (objects that are not the Atma) is what is called 'mrityu' (death). This is the *asat* (that, which is not the Satya), *achit* (that, which is not pure consciousness) *dukha* (sorrow).

Generally, we disdain that, which is available in our own heart and want objects we don't have. This is why our life becomes *dukhi* (sorrowful), *agnaani* (lacking Gnan), and *jada* (insensate). The curtain of desires hides our *aananda-svaroop*a (the bliss that is our true form; our essence). Let go of wanting anything, and experience the anand that is the Brahman.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Do Ishwara-Bhajan.

When I was still living in my village, I took *deekshaa* (formal initiation) from a Mahatma. After the diksha ceremony was over, he told me, ‘My child, you have become *mukta* (liberated from the cycle of rebirth) now.’

‘Maharaj,’ I said, ‘now that you have made me *mukta* by your *kripaa* (Grace), what need have I to do bhajan (loving meditation of Bhagwan)?’

The Mahatma smiled. ‘My son, do bhajan to fill your time. We don’t desire the fruit of bhajan by asking Bhagwan for Mukti (Moksha). The Atma is *nitya mukta* (eternally free); bhajan is done to fill time. We have to fill every moment of our life with lofty activities. You should now spend your time doing bhajan.’

Umaa kahahun mein anubhava apanaa,

sata hari bhajana jagata saba sapanaa.

Umaa raama svabhaava je`hi jaanaa,

taahi bhajana taji bhaava na aanaa.

(Bhagwan Shankar told Bhavaniji, ‘Uma, I am telling you what I have experienced. Bhagwan’s bhajan is the only Satya; this world is merely a dream. Uma, any person who once gets to know the nature of Shri Rama has no inclination for anything except doing Bhagwan’s bhajan.’)

Narayana! A human being should depend totally on Bhagwan. He should sacrifice his ego. He should establish his Beloved, Bhagwan, on the lap of his affection. Do the bhajan of the *antaryaamee eeshvara*

(the Ishwara who is in all hearts) with great love, and fulfill your life as a human being. Do you know what will happen if you fail to take advantage of this golden opportunity? *Bhajana binu baila biraane` hoyibai* – you will be compelled to go on working like an oxen who turns the oil-mill, till you are exhausted. Your life will be that of an enslaved animal. *Paraadheena sapane`hu sukha naahin* – an enslaved person cannot even dream of happiness.

If you want *sukha* (perfect happiness), do the bhajan of the *sukha-svaroopā eeshvara* (the Ishwara whose essence is sukha). Think of Hari (Bhagwan) with love in your heart. He will do the *harana* (taking away) of your worldly fears. He will accept you and establish you in His own *abhaya-pada* (position of fearlessness). When the Ishwara is *prasanna* (pleased) He gives Himself, you know! He makes your heart His abode. Bhagwan is the owner of His bhakta's heart. It is the Ishwara who protects and provides for His bhaktas. A bhakta is immersed in the bhajan of his Beloved, the Ishwara, who abides in his heart. Do Ishwara bhajan and remain happy and carefree.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

The Need For Abhyasa.

It is extremely difficult to cultivate self-restraint. A person who has succeeded in being able to restrain his body, mind, and senses, is his own most beneficial friend. A person who has not learnt self-control becomes his own worst enemy. This is very true – ‘*Ati hee kathina hai niyama patha chalibo*’ – it is extremely difficult to go on the path of self-discipline. However, *abhyaasa* (practice) has been given great importance in life.

To think, ‘I am the *de`ha*’ – the gross physical form – is also an abhyasa. It is a false conviction, developed by years of faulty belief. Iron cuts iron, a diamond cuts another diamond, the abhyasa of *de`haadhyasa* (the subtle ego of being a body) can only be cut away by abhyasa.

What is it that cannot be achieved by abhyasa? Hold on to the hope that you will succeed in your efforts. Don’t be disheartened. Continue with your efforts for spiritual progress. *Vikaara* (distortions) take place without effort. Perspiration comes naturally, but we have to make the effort to wash it off. What you need to see is how vigilant you are about yourself. A person who does not do *sanskaara* (actions for purification) and is not alert about himself harms himself.

Abhyasa means to *duharaanaa* (to repeat; to practice repeatedly). When you do something repeatedly, meditate or some object with a feeling of reverence, it becomes a part of your life.

One gentleman had a buffalo who gave birth to a calf. He picked up the calf, and made up his mind to pick it up every day. It became his habit to pick the calf up every day, and the calf also got used to being picked by him, and allowed itself to be lifted by the man.

The calf grew into a full-grown buffalo, and the man continued to pick it up every day. He developed the capacity to lift a full-grown, healthy buffalo! He achieved this by practice. Thus, there is a need for developing certain good habits in life. Practice enables a person to do the most difficult deeds with ease.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Bhagwat Kripa, Mahatma Kripa.

The question comes up: is Bhagwan's *kripaa* (Grace) necessary for *aatma-saakshaatkaara* (obtaining the direct personal experience of the Atma)?

Narayana! It is itself a great kripa of Bhagwan that we have a human form; else, we could easily have been a bird, or an animal with four legs, picking up our food with our mouth!

Bhagwan gathered up the good deeds we did in countless past lives, called the *sanchita* (accumulated total of good and bad deeds), and created our *praarabdha* (fate created by past actions) that gave us a human form. The human form has the ability to do *satkarma* (good deeds), be wise and intelligent, and bring happiness into our life. This is a great kripa of Bhagwan.

A human is meant to lead a life of Dharma (eternal righteousness). *Dharmaacharana* (leading a life according to the rules of Dharma) is not possible in any other *yonis* (species). A human form is for making new inventions, spreading anand, and obtaining *paramaananda* (supreme bliss).

Kabahunka kari karunaa nara de`hee, de`ta eesha binu he`tu sane`hee.

(Bhagwan Graces us by giving us a human form, merely out of affection for us.)

Getting a human form is an indication of Bhagwan's kripa. When a person's *punya* (spiritual merit due to good deeds) becomes ripe, the person gets *mumukshaa* (the desire to be free of the cycle of rebirth)

by Bhagwan's Grace. Then he gets the association of a Mahapurusha (enlightened Saint).

When combined with a Mahapurusha, the Ishwara becomes double; otherwise He is single! When the Ishwara and the Mahapurusha both come into our life, it results in bringing importance into our life. A *shakti* (power) manifests, which elevates us. If you open your heart to a Mahapurusha without any pretensions, he will open his heart to you in the same way.

You will see that the Atma in you and the Atma in the Mahapurusha is one. A non-dual *aatma-tattva* (the essence that is the Atma) has manifested in two forms. Therefore, Bhagwan's *kripa* is needed up to the time you get the association of a Mahapurusha. After that, you will obtain Tattvagnan (Gnan about the Tattva – the essence – of the Brahman). You will become *mukta* (liberated from the cycle of rebirth), because Bhagwan is established in the Mahapurusha. It is by Bhagwan's Grace that you get a Mahapurusha's association.

One point is, if, after getting Moksha (liberation from the cycle of rebirth), Bhagwan and Bhagwan's *kripa* continue to remain, it becomes a kind of *bandhana* (bondage). Therefore, Bhagwan liberates a bhakta when he gets Tattvagnan. The person becomes independent of all factors through Tattvagnan. Tattvagnan is obtained when a person gets a Mahatma whom he serves without having any ulterior motive.

Bhagwan's *kripa* enables a person to come close to a Mahatma. Narayana! Bhagwan's *kripa* continues to do its work up to the time a person's *antahkarana* (fourfold mind; subtle body) becomes pure. A Mahatma's *kripa* is needed to obtain *aatma-saakshaatkaara* (a direct personal experience of the Atma).

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Vedanta Shravana.

The question arises: is *ve`danta shravana* (listening to and absorbing discourses on Vedanta) helpful in making a person free of *paapa* (sin)?

Narayana! If you wish to make some scientific experiments in a laboratory, you will not achieve any noteworthy success if your mind is distracted by other matters, or if you are drowsy, and mentally lethargic. In the same way, when you do shravan about the Paramatma, you will not be able to grasp what is said if your mind wanders among the people and objects you love.

Another point is that Vedanta shravan does not mean just listening with your ears. Shravan is a technical word; it means, a decision taken by the intellect, coming to an intellectual or logical conclusion. The Shrutis (Vedic verses) establish that the Atma and the Brahman are one, and the intellect makes a firm resolve to accept this statement as the Truth. This principle is established through the process of all the methods of reasoning, like the beginning and conclusion, practice, nature, result, benefit, and logic. To understand and absorb this is the shravan of Vedanta. Nobody can reach this conclusion unless he is qualified for it. Merely listening to discourses on Vedanta is not Vedanta shravan.

A person needs to study and learn even worldly subjects like law, medicine, finance, and science. How can anyone expect to understand and absorb the profound knowledge of the Vedas by mere listening?

It is a fact that shravan is also a *punya karma* (action that gives spiritual merit); it is not a complete waste even if you do not understand. Even if your mind is not *pavitra* (purified), listen to talk on the Vedanta every day. Go to discourses even if you feel drowsy when you listen. Shravan

is, itself, such a punya that your *paapa* (sins) are gradually washed away by listening. This includes the paapas of previous births as well as this birth. Your *antahkarana* (fourfold mind; subtle body) will become pure. The greatest sinner can get *kalyaana* (the greatest good fortune; Moksha) by doing shravan.

This world is filled with countless millions of *paapee* (sinners). Imagine that you take the three greatest sinners, and that you are the greatest of these three. That means, there is no greater sinner than yourself! If even that greatest sinner sits on the boat of Gnan, he will safely cross over the ocean of his sins. He will obtain the Gnan of his own *svaroop*a (essence; true form) and become free of all paapa.

I will tell you something – never be disheartened by seeing anyone's paapa; whether it is of a previous birth or this birth; whether it is old or new; whether it is a big paapa or a small one. Have full faith that the day will be come when his paapa will be destroyed, and he will become fit for obtaining Bhagwan.

Never feel disgusted when you see the past or present paapa in anyone's life. Don't have hatred for him, or consider him to be lowly. One day, he, too, will shine the way a Mahatma shines. It is the same Paramatma who is in us all. It is a *bhram* (false understanding) to consider anyone to be *neecha* (lowly; fallen), *deena* (pitiable), *heena* (impoverished), or unfit for Paramartha (the supreme achievement, enlightenment).

Giddha adhamatara aamisha bhogee, gati paayee je`hi jaachata yogee.

(A vulture, who eats meat is a lowly creature, but Giddharaj was given a position that even Yogis long for, because he gave his life to save Sitaji.)

When a prostitute is given salvation, a paapi like Ajamil is given salvation, and a giddha is given salvation, you may have doubts about your own salvation, but here is no reason to harbor doubts about anyone else getting salvation. Don't consider anyone to be a lowly person. The Paramatma, who is in you, is the same Paramatma who is in the other person's heart.

Don't see paapa in others, and don't think about paapa – neither in yourself, nor in anyone else. Yes, certainly do Vedanta shravan. You will become an *adhikaari* (eligible person) for Vedanta shravan tomorrow, if not today; day after tomorrow if not tomorrow; or maybe the day after that; but one day you will attain that eligibility. Your *buddhi* (intellect) will attain the ability to reach a firm conclusion based on the logic of the Shastras, that the Atma and the Brahman are one.

Shravan is an *antaragna sadhana* (an internal effort for spiritual progress). Do Vedanta shravan. Obtain the direct personal experience of your own non-dual, unattached swarup. You are the Sacchidananda (Sat=pure existence, Chit=pure consciousness, Anand=pure bliss) Parabrahm.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Vyapya-Vyapakata.

Vyaapakataa (the quality of being all-pervading) should also be understood. One vyapakata is like an iron ball that is placed in a fire till it becomes red hot. People say, 'Fire has become *vyaapta* (pervaded) in the iron ball.' In this, the iron ball is separate and fire is separate. One pervades the other.

Similarly, the Paramatma – who is *gnaana-svaroop*a (the essence, or true form, of Gnan) – pervades the objects of this world. An ordinary person understands only that the world is like an iron ball and the Paramatma is like the fire that pervades it. *Agniryathaiko bhuvanam pravishto roopam roopam pratiroopo babhoova*. This is also a type of vyapakata. It is called, *moorta-sanyogitvaroop*a *vyaapakataa*, meaning, something subtle has pervaded a gross object.

In Vedanta, however, the word *vyaapaka* (all-pervading) is not used in the same sense. In Vedanta, the word vyapak is like the matter, or substance, an object is made of. The object is the *kaarya* (effect), and the matter is the *upaadaana* (basic matter; raw material). For example, clay is a matter of which a pot is made. The clay is *vyaapta* (pervading) in the pot. That means, the pot is a form of clay. Clay was used to make all kinds of shapes – a pot, a jar, a cup, an urn, etc. *Vyaapya* (pervaded) and *vyaapaka* (pervading) are not separate objects. That means, when the *kaarana* (cause) is woven into the *kaarya* (effect), it is called vyapak. However, Shankaracharya's definition of Vedanta is that this vyapakata is also not accepted as the main factor.

Shankar Vedanta believes in another kind of vyapakata. It is like seeing something that seems to be a snake, but is actually a piece of coiled rope. Now, see the order in which the examples are given. When the

example of the pot is given, it is said, 'Like the clay that pervades the pot.' When the example of water is given, it is said, 'Like the water that pervades the waves.' When the example of fire is given, it is said, 'Like the fire that pervades the sparks.' When the example of the wind is given, it is said, 'Like the wind that pervades every breath we take.' When the example of space is given, it is said, 'Like the *mahaakaasha* (the sky) pervades the *ghataakaasha* (the space inside a pot).' When giving the example of *de'sha* (space), it is said, 'Like the *dik-tattva* (the essence of the directions) pervades the North-South-East-West.'

The differences are imagined; the directions are one, because everything is everywhere. When giving the example of Time, it is said, 'Just as time pervades the past, present and future.' The three tenses are imagined in time. The oneness is established by the *sattaa* (pure existence) of the *adhishtaana* (substratum). This is with reference to the *pancha mahaabhoota* – the five elements.

Let us proceed further. The *mana* (emotional mind) is *vyaapta* (pervading) in the scenes seen in a dream. The dream contains nothing that is separate from the mana. This is the *vyaapakataa* (all-pervading quality) of the mana. All the things that are seen in the waking and dreaming states are also present in the deep sleep state, in seed form. Therefore, *sushupti* (the deep sleep state) is the seed, and is *sanskaaraatmaka* (exists as subtle subconscious impressions). Sushupti has no mental movements, therefore, the objects seen in the *jaagrita* (waking) state and *svapna* (dreaming) state are *vyaapta* (all-pervading) in the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep.

The next example is about *bhraanti* (false impression). Just as a snake is perceived in a coiled rope, or blueness is perceived in the colorless sky,

the *adhishtaana* (substratum) pervades this entire Creation of moving and unmoving objects.

The *rajju-sarpa* (rope-snake) is an example of *nir-upaadhika bhram* (a false understanding created by one thing being superimposed on another). Once a person gets the Gnan that the rope is the substratum of what seems to be a snake, the belief that it is a snake is removed. The blueness of the sky is an example of a false understanding caused by the superimposition of color on that, which is colorless. When a person gets Gnan that the sky is the *adhishtana* that is colorless, he will continue to see the blueness, but know that the blueness is a non-existent perception. The fact is that the rope and the sky are also imagined in the *brahmchaitanya* (consciousness that is the Brahman).

The *vyapakata* of the Brahman and the *vishva* (world) is not such that any separate object has pervaded another separate object. It is the Brahman who is perceived as the *Vishwa*. It is the Brahman who has become both the *kaarya* (effect) and the *kaarana* (cause). The effect and the cause are both perceptions, and the Brahman is the substratum on which they are superimposed. The fact is, there is no pervading and no being pervaded in the Brahman. The one *adviteeya* (non-dual) Parabrahm Paramatma is seen in this entire world of moving and unmoving objects. Nothing else exists. That is why the Tejobindu Upanishad states that *vyapakta* is *mithyaa* (a relative truth).

‘Vyaapya-vyaapakataa mithyaa.’

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Upaya-Upeya.

‘*Upaaya-upe`ya`*’ (the means; the method to attain something – that, which is attained) are technical terms used by the Vaishnavas (worshippers of Bhagwan Vishnu). Anything that is done to achieve an objective is called the *upaaya* (means) and that, which is achieved through the upaya is called the upeya.

Upaya means *upaadaayaapiye`he`yaah* – that, which is accepted initially, and then discarded. For example, you use a boat to cross a river, but leave it behind when you proceed on your journey. The boat was an upaya, a means for crossing the river.

Very well, you make a Guru (teacher, not the spiritual Guru) to obtain knowledge. When the knowledge is obtained, you leave the Guru. That Guru was an upaya to learn what you wanted to learn.

You do many *sadhana* (methods for spiritual progress) for obtaining Bhagwan, but they all become redundant once you obtain Bhagwan. The sadhans that you give up when you obtain Bhagwan are the upaya, and Bhagwan is the upeya.

When the means (upaya) is also the goal (upeya), that is *sharanaagati* (total surrender to Bhagwan, seeking refuge in Him). The special factor in sharanagati is that Bhagwan is the upaya as well as the upeya.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Fifteen-Sixteen Words, And The Hospital.

I had once read about a horse in a foreign country. It was trained so well that it could give answers to some sixteen questions. It understood sixteen words, and pointed to them with its foot, in answer to the questions it was asked.

In the same way, we Vedantis also remember fifteen or sixteen words, and use these to answer the questions people ask. If anyone were to tell us to stop using these words – *adhishtaana* (substratum), *adhikarana* (base, support), *aabhaasa* (illusion), *pratibimba* (reflection), *avachhinna* (separated), *adhyasa* (a superimposition connected to something), *abhyasa* (practice; habit), *maayaa* (the Ishwara's power of illusion), *upaadhi* (superimposition), *nishtha* (faith), *anirvachacneeya* (that, which cannot be defined), etc – we will be completely lost! All our Gnan abides in these fifteen-sixteen words. We keep returning to them for whatever we try to explain. Those who understand our language find it easy to grasp what we say; others find it difficult to understand.

I told you about a foreign horse. I will tell you another story about a horse. A Maharaja had a beautiful horse that was very intelligent and very well trained. One day, the Maharaja rode out alone. On the way he fell, and was badly hurt. The horse was well-trained. It went and sat close to the Maharaja in such a way that the Maharaja could clamber onto its back. Then the horse stood up and took the Maharaja straight to the hospital.

Do you know which hospital the horse carried the Maharaja to? It was the veterinary hospital where it had been treated when it had got hurt! Similarly, the training we get is such that we always bring you to our

own hospital! We will answer all your questions and give you the solution to your problems. We will treat all your wounds and attend to all your ailments.

Do you know how and where we will do this?

Narayana! With these same fifteen-sixteen words, and that same hospital!

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Shuddhi And Gnan.

The *shuddha* (pure, according to the Shastras) *vastu* (object; the Paramatma) is not *saadhana-saadhya* (obtained through effort). *Saadhana* (method for spiritual progress) is done to remove the *dosha* (faults; flaws) of *mala* (impurities) and *vikshe`pa* (disturbances) of the *antahkarana* (fourfold mind; the subtle body). *Aavarana-bhanga* (the breaking down of the curtain of ignorance that hides the Satya, Atma) is achieved through the *mahaa-vaakya* (the ultimate statement of the Vedas that establishes the non-dual Brahman being the Atma and the substratum of everything), like *tattvamasi* (that=That, the Brahman, Asi=is, Tvam=you, the Atma).

The Paramatma is here, now, and in the form of the *pratyak chaitanya* (the consciousness in each being). It seems to be unavailable due to *agnaana* (lack of Gnan about the Atma being the Brahman). The only *upaaya* (method; means) for the removal of this agnan is *brahmaatmaikyagnaana* – the Gnan that the Brahman and the Atma are one. All other *antaranga* (internal) and *bahirang* (external) sadhans are useful in so far that they help us in the awakening of Brahmagnan.

Saadhanaa (effort for spiritual success) raises an individual to supreme heights. The knowledge about the *siddha vastu* (the object that is established as the Brahman) negates the subtle ego of individuality. The complete removal of all feeling of separateness, and the Brahman indicated by the absence of duality, is our own Atma, and the Gnan if this oneness is called 'Brahmagnan'.

Once Brahmagnan is attained, the person realizes that not even a grain exists that is separate from the Brahman. When using *vive`ka* (discrimination, separating the Atma from that which is not the Atma),

it is said that the Brahman is different from the *sthoola* (gross), *sookshma* (subtle), and *kaarana* (basic cause). Once a person gets the knowledge about the Brahman, he knows that nothing exists except the *advaya* (no-dual) *aatma-vastu* (the object that is the Atma).

Only the Atma-vastu exists; no Ishwara, no *jagat* (world), and no *jeeva* (the Atma in the individual). The Ishwara's separateness, the perceived reality of the jagat, and the separate individuals are all negated by the Brahmabodha (knowledge about the Brahman). Therefore, from the viewpoint of a *tattvagna* (one who has Tattvagnan) Mahapurusha, everything is the *sacchidaananda brahma* (the Brahman who is Sat=pure existence, Chit=pure consciousness, Anand=pure bliss). This entire Creation is, as it is, the *nirvikaara* (beyond deterioration or distortion) Sacchidananda Brahman.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

The Method For Aparoksha Gnan.

We can have *aparoksha gnaana* (knowledge that is a direct personal experience) only of that, with which we become one. It is not possible to have the aparoksha Gnan of anything that we have not merged into; so much so that we know the pot (symbolizing the human body) only when we identify with it. The *antahkarana – avachhinna – chaitanya* (the consciousness that is not separate from the subtle body or fourfold mind), is the *pramaataavachhinna – chaitanya* (the consciousness in the one who establishes), the Brahman, when it moves through the channel of the *pramaana – vritti* (the mental tendency that establishes) and merges with the *prame`ya – avachhinna – chaitanya* (the consciousness that is not separate from the object that is established). When this happens the person gets the Gnan of the *prame`ya* (the Brahma who is established) as a direct personal experience.

This is just like water being sent into a field through a pipe. It spreads all over the field. In the same way, when our *chaitanya* (consciousness) rides on our *vritti* (mental inclination or tendency), and moves towards the *prame`ya* (that, which is established, the Brahman) and merges with the consciousness that is not separate from it (the Brahman), we get Gnan. It is not possible to get Gnan unless our consciousness is merged into the pure consciousness that is the Brahman.

Without going into the debate of whether the *vritti* (inclinations) of the *indreeya* (senses) merge into the *vishaya* (sense objects) or whether the *vishaya* come into the *vrittis* of the senses, it is essential to know that Gnan about the objects of the senses cannot be obtained unless the mental inclinations take on their form, and identify with them. The mind has to identify with sense objects to be aware of them. When the

mind identifies with the sense objects, the consciousness (that is not separate from the mental inclinations) automatically merges with the sense objects. They are one, because the vrittis and the vishays are not really two separate things in two different places. Neither are the vrittis separate from the *de'sha* (place; space). It is just that the *desha*, *kaala* (time) and *vishay* seem to be separate in two or three forms. The purport of this is that from the viewpoint of the *adhishtaana* (substratum; the Brahman), the mental inclinations, place, time and objects are mere pulsations of the Brahman – who is not separate from the pure consciousness in an individual.

We cannot understand any object unless we become one with it. The 'other' will have something that is hidden from us. In the same way, as long as we don't have Brahmagnan (Gnan about the Brahman), the *bhraanti* (false understanding) of *bandhana* (being bound) cannot be removed. If *avidyaa* (lack of proper understanding; nescience) is not removed, Moksha (Liberation from the cycle of rebirth) is far away. This is an established fact.

Therefore, if you want to obtain Gnan about the Parabrahma Paramatma you have to let go of your feeling of being a separate individual, and become one with the Paramatma. This is the method of Aparoksha Gnan – the Gnan that comes from a direct personal experience. Enlightened Mahatmas always think of the Parabrahma Paramatma as their own Atma, their own consciousness. Unless this happens they cannot have the *saakshaatkaara* (direct personal experience) that is the Aparoksha Gnan.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Vyaktittva.

What is this *vyaktittva* (individuality; personality)? *Vyaktittva* means *parichhinnatva* (separateness). Unless a person imagines himself to be a separate entity, he will not be aware of the *prapancha* (interactive world). The awareness of the sounds and forms that create this interactive world of ours is done by the *gnaane`ndriya* (sense organs). Proper and improper actions are done by the *karme`ndriya* (organs of action). Effort is enabled by the *praana* (life-giving breath). Objects are given names by the *mana* (emotional mind). *Dharma-adharma* (that which is instituted by the Shastras – that, which is forbidden by the Shastras) are imagined by the *buddhi* (intellect) that has *sanskaara* (subtle subconscious impressions) of what is favorable and what is unfavorable.

Where does all this exist?

It exists in the *vyaktittva* of the individual. The root of *vyaktittva* lies in the *bhrama* (false understanding) that the *anaatmaa* (that, which is not the Atma) is the Atma – it is our ‘I’.

What is the root of this *bhram*?

The root of this *bhram* is *agnaana* (lack of Gnan; ignorance) about our *svaroop*a (essence; true form).

The fact is that this *agnan* is nothing! However, as long as any person has an *aham-bhaava* (a feeling of being a separate ‘I’), he has the *prateeti* (perception), ‘I do not know myself to be the Brahman.’ The *prateeti* may be anything, but its *vishay* (object) is always *mithyaa* (unreal; a relative truth). *Brahmaamaikyabodha* (the Gnan that the Brahman and ‘I’ – the Atma – are one) is useful because it removes

agnan. Else, the difference between Gnan and agnan is merely imagined in our swarup.

When a person has agnan, it is essential that his vyaktittva be made *shuddha* (pure, according to the Shastras).

What is the *shuddhi* (purification) of the vyaktittva?

The shuddhi of the vyaktittva is that the person learns to use *vive`ka* (discrimination, separating the Satya that can never be negated from the mithya). He uses vivek in everything he sees and does. He realizes, 'That, of which I am a *saakshee* (witness) is not my swarup. Nor is it *sukha* (complete contentment), nor *che`tana* (having consciousness); it is not even an *abaadhita satta* (a truth that can never be negated).'

Since the *drishya* (that, which is seen; separate from the one who sees) has no *sattva-mahattva* (existence-importance), there is no need to have *raaga-dve`sha* (attachment-aversion) for it. This realization results in weakening our attachments and aversions, and a person gets peace of mind.

There is no need to do any *dhaaranaa-dhyaana* (giving profound thought- meditation) about the things we see in this world. Whatever will happen, will happen. To free yourself from the prison of your vyaktittva you need to have *mumukshaa* (a wish to be free), and then ask your Sadguru (enlightened Guru who has the capacity to dispel your agnan), and do *shravana* (listen to and grasp discourses) of Vedanta.

A person who has doubts needs to do *manana* (give serious thought to the subject) and *nididhyaasana* (bring the mind back repeatedly to the subject) to conquer the faults of *viparyaya* (misapprehensions).

After *avidyaa* (nescience; faulty understanding) has been removed by Tattvagnan (Gnan about the Tattva – the essence, or true form, of the Brahman), a person's vyaktittva remains like a person who sees the world as a dream. His perceptions are temporary. Vyaktittva means prateeti. What are the good and bad qualities of a person seen in a dream? What previous birth would he have had? What will his future birth be like? None of this has any validity, because a person seen in a dream exists only for the duration of the dream. Involving the mind in such trivialities will not end your woes.

Therefore, individuality is a perception, like something seen in a dream. There is no need to weave a web of worries about it. Such worrying is a barrier in the attainment of the extraordinary *sukha* (complete contentment) of *jeevanamukti* (liberation from all care while still alive), or being supremely non-dependent on any factor. Even the differences of *saadhaka-baadhaka* (one who strives for spiritual progress-one who blocks spiritual progress) is also a miracle of vyaktittva. Anything that is special or different is a miracle of individuality. There is no vyaktittva that is separate from the Atma that is pure consciousness, the substratum of all that exists.

Aatmaive`dam sarvam; brahmaive`dam sarvam; sa e`ve`dam sarvam; ahame`veedam sarvam. Know that everything is the Atma; everything is the Brahman; all that exists, is the Atma; I am the Atma which is all there is.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

The Highest Form Of Prema.

The highest form of *pre`ma* (pure love) is that, which is equal and reciprocal. A one-sided prema is the stage that comes before reciprocated prema. In that state, the lover becomes anxious. There is a lacking. There is no feeling of attraction from the other. Legendary birds like the *chaataka* and *chakora*, the fish whose very existence is the water in which they live, and the lotuses that bloom only in the rays of the moon, come in the category of *e`kaangee pre`ma* – one-sided prema. Theirs is not the effulgence of *poorna pre`ma* (prema that is whole), because their prema is not reciprocated by the object of their love.

In the love-life of the saras bird, there is no *viyoga* (separation), and there is no *sanjoga* (coming together) for the chakravak bird. Their prema cannot be poorna prema in the superimposition of time and space. In one, they are in a constant state of separation. Even when they meet they have the feeling of being apart. This is a *vipareetataa* (reversal) of the *chitta* (mental inclination; state of mind). It is a characteristic of prema, but not the *svaroopa* (essence; true form) of poorna prema. That, which increases in togetherness and decreases in separation – or decreases in togetherness and increases in separation – is not prema at all. Time and space do not affect prema.

The *bhraanti* (wrong understanding) may be due to *avidyaa* (nescience; ignorance), or due to prema, but its result is always *dukha* (sorrow). It does not have the form of the prema that is supremely effulgent. The mind fluctuates between increased and decreased prema. A fleeting impression of some *dosha* (fault; flaw) in the Beloved becomes a cause

for dukha. Therefore, the highest form of prema is when prema is reciprocated by the Beloved.

A completeness of prema is manifested only in the prema of Radha-Krishna. In the waves of prema, Krishna takes on the form of Radha, and she takes on His form. This is not the swarup of the *nirguna-nishkriya* (without attributes-inactive) Brahman; this is the *saguna-sakriya* (with attributes-active) *divya* (sublime), pulsating Brahman.

No kind of difference is present in prema. It has a quality that cannot be defined. It is self-effulgent, known only by a direct personal experience – by *saakshaatkaara*. That is why it is called *pre`maadvaitya* – a non-dual prema, or *rasaadvaitya* – undivided sweetness. This prema is not the result of *brahmashakti*; it is not the power of the Brahman. It is not a *vikshe`pa* (disturbance) either. Prema is, itself, the Brahman that is special!

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Actual Bhajan.

Instead of identifying with your gross physical body, become one with the *viraata* (the whole world). This body is not your body; your body is the *aakaasha* (sky; space). The akash is not your body; your body is the *chitta-aakaasha* (the inner space of your consciousness). The chittakash is not your body; your body is the *chid-aakaasha* (the universal consciousness).

There is no *bhaava* (feeling) of *shareeree-ashareeree* (having a body - not having a body); you are *advaya* (non-dual). Just as a coiled rope seems to be a snake, the substratum of all Creation seems to be this *sansara* (the interactive world). The fact is, the Atma is the Paramatma. You, yourself, are the *paramaatmaa* (supreme Atma). Know yourself to be the *adviteeya* (non-dual) *parabrahm* (supreme Brahman) Paramatma. 'I am the *sarva-adhishthaana* (substratum of everything), *sarvaavabhaasaka* (the illuminator of everything), *svayamprakaahsa* (self-effulgent) Paramatma.' Become established in this oneness, this non-duality.

One is a *sankhyaa* (number; quantity). It can be halved and it can be doubled. Sankhya is a *guna* (quality; attribute); it is not a *tattva* (essence). The Advaita (non-dual Brahman) is a Tattva. Allow yourself to have *aasthaa* (belief) in it. To have belief in the Advaita Tattva does not mean *tyaaga* (giving up; renunciation), *vairaagya* (detachment), *upaasanaa* (loving worship), Yoga (being connected to Bhagwan), or Samadhi. It is Gnan.

Faith in the Advaita means to know this non-dual essence as your Self, whether it is in birth and death, Hell and Heaven, or any other perception, and being aloof from them all. Birth, death, Heaven, Hell

etc are all perceptions. Know your Self to be the *asanga* (unattached), *advaya* (non-dual) Atma Tattva. The *advaita-aatmaa-anubhooti* (the direct personal experience of knowing that you are the non-dual Atma) is the *bhajana* (loving meditation) of the person who has realized that it is the one Atma in all, and all are in that one Atma.

Would you eat grapes if there was no sweetness in them? Would you eat chillies if they lacked the pungent flavor? The taste of an item is its *rasa* (sweetness; special flavor). The difference in the *rasa* of the *upaadhee* (the superimposition that is connected to something) of the *kaarana* (cause) is no justification for having *raaga* (attachment) or *dve'sha* (aversion) for any object. A human being also has to eat the bitter substances for good health. Isn't the Paramatma present in the taste, quality, and names of the bitter foods? The *sattaa* (existence), *prakaasha* (effulgence), and *rasa* in every object in this world is the Paramatma. Therefore, don't see the differences; see the oneness of the Advaya.

You focus on the differences, not on the lack of differences. The differences are because of the name, form, and attributes; there is no difference in the *sattaa* (basic substance), *chittaa* (consciousness) and *anand*. That, which is one in all, is not noticed.

You see the differences because of the *indreeya* (senses). Therefore, you have fallen into the *sansara*. Don't see the diversity; see the oneness. When you see the oneness, the form of your Gnan will become immense.

Your Gnan is *alpa* (limited) because it is derived through the sense organs given by Nature. This limitation will be removed when you see the oneness of the whole. When the *vritti* (mental inclination) is

ghataakaara (the form of the ghata – the pot – symbolizing the body), it is as big as the ghata (pot). But when it takes on the form of the Paramatma – who is the *abhinna-nimmita-upaadaana* (the matter that is not separate from the instrumental cause) – of this whole world, your Gnan will become *naaraayana-aakaara* (the form of Narayana, the Brahman with form and attributes). Feel yourself established in Shri Narayana.

That, which you see, is Bhagwan. That, which rises in the heart, is Bhagwan – ‘*Aham idam sarvam cha brahmaiva*’. The Paramatma is the only reality that exists in the entire interactive world seen all round. All the objects and beliefs are in the Paramatma, for the Paramatma, and forms of the Paramatma. Therefore, the oneness is real; the diversity is a false perception.

Since only the *e`katva* (oneness) is real, where is the scope for pride regarding any individual greatness? When all are one, who should *raga-dvesha-bhaya* (fear) be for? How can one be a friend and another a foe?

Matavaadina so araja yahee,

Apane`-apane` ishtadeva ko vyaapaka maanate` hau ki naahin?

Yadi tuma vyaapaka nahina maanata, jeeva dasaa tahan aayi rahee.

(Shri Kashtajivha Swami)

(This is my question to the people of the different Sects – do you believe your Ishtadeva, the form you worship, to be all-pervading or not? If not, the state of a jeeva – an individual – prevails.)

Actually, bhajan is experiencing the non-duality of the Brahman. The bhajan of a person who believes in the Advaita Tattva (non-dual essence that is the Brahman) contains no *avidyaa* (nescience; faulty understanding about the Brahman), no *asmitaa* (identification with the body), no raga, no dvesha, and no bhaya.

The meaning of true bhajan is to see only that one, advaya Brahman in all beings, in all states, in all forms.

I-you, this-that, etc is merely worldly interaction. Belief in the one, non-dual Paramatma is the actual form of bhajan. Be firmly established in your faith in the Advaita Brahman. The *adviteeya* (where there is no other) Parabrahm Paramatma is *sama* (equal in all) and *nirdosha* (free of faults). Therefore, when a person's mind is established in equanimity for all, he is seated in the Brahman. Only such a person has conquered the cycle of rebirth.

*Ihaiva tairjitah sargo ye`shaam saamyee` sthitam manah,
nirdosham hi samam brahma tasmaad brahmani te` sthitaah.*

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Different Kinds Of Behavior.

Among the Tattvagnani (enlightened Mahatmas), some are like Vasisthaji, who preach Gnan. Some are like Shukadevji, who remain immersed in a Samadhi. Some are like Dattatreya, who wander as mendicants. Some, like Rama, adhere to righteousness and decorum. Some, like Shri Krishna, are supremely independent of all rules.

Someone may ask, 'What happens when a person is intoxicated by some substance like *bhaanga* (opium)?' Some people drink bhang and fall asleep, some eat a huge meal, some start to sing, some laugh uproariously, some sit and meditate, and some begin to weep. Now, tell me, bhang is one substance, but it affects people in different ways. Why is that? It is because of the individual natures. People behave according to their nature.

Even a Gnani (one who has attained Gnan) behaves according to his nature. Don't focus on the Gnani's lifestyle; even enlightened Mahatmas differ in their behavior. After obtaining Gnan, a person can take *sannyasa* (become a Monk) like Yagyavalkya, or live as a Grihastha (married householder) like Vasishtha, and continue to do rituals of worship. Or, he can wander like a mendicant, or live in luxury, as Shri Krishna did.

Krishno bhogee shukastyaagee nripau janakaraaghavau,

karmanishthaa vasishthaadyaah sarve`te` gnaaninaah samaah.

Shri Krishna is a *bhogee* (one who indulges in luxuries), Shukadevji is a *tyaagee* (one who gives up every worldly comfort and consideration). Janak and Rama are Kings, Vasishthaji is *karma-nishtha* (having faith in

Yogino bhogino raaginashche`tare` drishyate` gnaaninaam naikaroopaa gatih. Some Gnanis are Yogis, restraining their minds and senses, some are bhogis, indulging their senses, and some are *raagee* (filled with attachments) – the behavior of a Gnani is not seen to be of only one kind.

Shri Udiya Babaji Maharaj often quoted this shloka. Its meaning is that some Tattvagnanis live with decorum, some have a *bhrashta* (sullied) lifestyle, and some behave like mad men, when they live on this earth.

Na ke`nachit karmanaasya mokshah pratibadhyate`.

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The Ishwara creates the world, but He does not become the creator. He sustains the world, but He does not become the sustainer. He destroys the world, but He does not become the destroyer. He is always established in His *svaroopā* (essence; true form).

Similarly, a Tattvagnani remains established in his swarup, no matter what his behavior or lifestyle may be like. He is at liberty to make an Ashram and have disciples, or let everything go to ruin, but he does nothing. He has no feeling of doer-ship. All his interaction is in the Paramatma, whether he is active or idle. See the infallible state of a Tattvagnani who is established in the *asanga* (unattached) *advaya* (non-dual) Parabrahm Paramatma, and derive benefit from it.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

You And I Are Absolutely The Same.

There was a highly evolved Mahatma. He was a *tyaagee* (having renunciation) Mahapurusha. Wandering on the bank of a river, he came to a village and stopped there for a few days' rest. The local people developed great faith and reverence for him. 'He is a great tyaagi Mahatma. He is not at all concerned with worldly matters. He is always established in the Tattva (the essence of the Brahman),' they said.

The people's praises reached the Raja's ears, and he came to see this Mahatma. He also felt deep reverence for this saintly Monk. He asked the Mahatma to give him spiritual initiation. He became a disciple of the Mahatma.

'Maharaj, please stay here always,' requested the Raja. He gave the Mahatma his own bungalow with all the comforts and facilities. People brought gifts. An air-conditioner was installed, and beautiful lights were put up. The house had every conceivable luxury. The Mahatma lived there peacefully.

Some months later, the Raja came to visit the Mahatma. He saw the luxury in which the Mahatma was living. 'Maharaj,' he said, 'what is the difference between you and me? We are absolutely similar.'

'Yes, that is true, Rajan,' said the Mahatma. 'From the Tattva-drishti (the viewpoint of the essence) we are absolutely one. Your Tattva-drishti has awoken; mine has lapsed.'

Then the Mahatma stood up. 'Come, Raja, let us go for a walk by the river,' he said.

'Yes, Maharaj, let us take a walk,' said the Raja.

They walked for a mile, then another mile, and then another mile. The Mahatma showed no sign of wanting to turn back. He walked on steadily.

‘Maharaj,’ said the Raja, ‘we have come a long way – let us go back now.’

‘Rajan,’ said the Mahatma, ‘I have a wish to go to the Himalaya. Why don’t you come along?’

‘Maharaj! How can I just go with you? I have to get permission before I can leave the State. I must talk to my wife and son about this trip, and make suitable arrangements. I can’t just walk off with you at a moment’s notice.’

‘No, Raja Saheb! Do come! What is the difference between you and me? We are absolutely one. Just as I am walking on, you can also walk on with me.’

‘No, Maharaj,’ said the Raja. ‘This is not possible for me. I can’t just walk away from my responsibilities. My State comes under the British rule. I need their permission before I go out of it.’

‘Farewell, Raja Saheb,’ said he Mahatma. ‘Be happy. God bless you. I am going on a journey to the mountains. You and I are absolutely one, but you stay within your boundaries and I go out of the limits of your boundaries. From the viewpoint of the Tattva, you and I are absolutely the same. From the viewpoint of *vyavahaara* (worldly interaction) there is a lot of difference between us.’

Narayana! This talk about being one is nothing but vanity. People are not one from the viewpoint of wealth. They are not the same with

regard to indulgences, Dharma, or lifestyle. To speak of oneness is mere lip service.

Sita-Rama! The *leela* (sport) of Mahatmas is very different. Only the people of their level can understand the state of their mind and the purity of their heart. Only a Mahatma can know another Mahatma.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

The Characteristic Of A Sanyasi.

Swami Vishuddhananda Saraswati was a very learned Monk who lived in Kashi (Varanasi). His Mutt stands on Dashashvamedha Ghat.

A Raja came for his *darshan* (see someone you revere). He saw that Swamiji's lifestyle was as luxurious as any Raja's. 'Swamiji,' he asked, 'what is the characteristic of a Sanyasi?'

Swamiji called out to his servitors, and told them to tell the Raja to leave, and shut the doors. The Raja was *shraddhaalu* (having faith in the Swamiji). He waited with folded hands by the door all night, shivering in the cold.

When the doors were opened the next morning, the people saw the Raja waiting there. They informed Swamiji that the Raja had waited all night at the Ashram doors. Seeing the Raja's faith and sincerity, Swamiji asked the Raja to come to him.

'This is the characteristic of a Sanyasi,' he explained. 'A Sanyasi does not consider even a great Raja like you to be of any importance.'

Narayana! When a human being knows himself to be free of all *parichhinnataa* (separateness; worldly differences) the *chaitanya* (pure consciousness) that is the Ishwara – who is the ruler of all the separate beings – and the chaitanya of the one who no longer feels separate from the Ishwara or the world, become one, and serves the *a-parichhinna* (that, which is whole; not separated by lack of Gnan about the Brahman).

Peeche`-peeche` hari firain kahata kabeer-kabeer,

*brahmagnaanee aapa mahe`shwara, brahmagnaanee ko dhoondhata
parame`shvara.*

(Hari follows Kabir, calling out to him. A Brahmagnani is the Maheshwara (great Ishwara). The Parameshwara is always in search of Brahmagnanis.)

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

What Should A Guru Be Like?

The Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapurana states that a Guru should be *shrotriya* (one who has a thorough knowledge of the Shastras), *brahmanishtha* (having full faith in the Brahman), and *upashamaayana* (serene). The Bhagwat states that, which is hidden in the Vedas. The Bhagwat is a commentary on the Vedas; it contains nothing that is contrary to what the Vedas say. As a commentary on the Vedas, the Bhagwat clarifies that besides being shrotriya and Brahmanishtha, a Guru should also be *shaanta* (tranquil).

Now, see; it is written in the Gita, '*Upade`kshyanti te` gnaanam gnaaninastattvadarshinah.*' The Tattva-darshi (those who have seen the Tattva – the essence – of the Brahman) will give you teachings about Gnan. They are Gnanis (people who have obtained Gnan) who have had a direct personal experience of the Tattva; not mere book learning.

The Upanishad says, '*Shrotriyam brahmanishtham*', '*Tadvignartham sa gurume`vaabhigachhe`t samitpaanih.*' Yes! Go with *samidhaa* (useful items) in your hand, when you go to your Guru. If your Guru is an *agnihotri* (one who does the ritual of offering oblations in the sacred fire) you should take wood for the Yagna. If the Guru is a Sanyasi, you should not take firewood. Sanyasis do *antar-havan* (internal fire worship, offering the first five mouthfuls to the five digestive fires) – *praanaaya svaahaa, apaanaaya svaahaa, udaanaaya svaahaa, vyaayaana svaahaa, samaanaaya svaahaa*. Ingredients for cooking meals should be taken when you go to a Sanyasi. '*Samitpaani*' means that you should go with the feeling that you have the intention to pour the entire interactive world into the *gnaanaagni* (the fire of Gnan).

‘Gnaanaagni sarvakarmaani bhasmasaat kurute`rjuna (Arjuna, the fire of Gnan burns the fruits of all karmas to ashes.)’

Narayana! The Guru should be shrotriya Brahmanishtha upashamaayanam. If he is shrotriya but not Brahmanishtha, he will be incapable of knowing the Brahman. If he is Brahmanishtha but not shrotriya, he will not have the ability to verbally explain the purport of the Vedas. That is why both qualities – shrotriya and Brahmanishtha – are necessary in a Guru.

Upashamaayanam means that the six good qualities – *shama* (restraint of the senses), *dama* (restraining the organs of action), *titiksha* (the ability to endure), *shraddha* (faith), *samaadhaana* (having all doubts cleared) and *uparati* (lack of interest in the external world) etc have made him their abode. *‘Upashamaanaam tadupalakshitaanaam damaadinaam cha ayanam adhishtaanam.’* All the *sadguna* (good qualities) automatically become his servants. A person has to be *shaanta* (un-agitated; at peace) to obtain Tattvagnan.

The good qualities like upashamaayanam are concealed in the descriptions of shrotriyam brahmanishtham. The Bhagwat uses this word – upashamaayanam – to ensure that people understand that calmness is linked irrevocably to shrotriyam brahmanishtham. The Bhagwat has stated that a Guru should be serene. The Bhagwat is a commentary on the Vedas and it says nothing beyond what is given in the Vedas. It merely reveals the points that are indicated in the Vedas. This is the special quality of the Bhagwat.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

How Can We Get A Sadguru?

Narayana! When you have a real urge for a Sadguru (a Guru who can guide your spiritual journey) you will get a Sadguru. There is delay in getting a Sadguru as long as you feel no special urge to get one.

The Guru is a *roopa* (form) of our own Atma, The Ishwara is also a roop of our Atma. The Ishwara's form is *maayaavishishta* (attached to His Maya – His power of illusion), or *antaryaami* (seated in the heart). Similarly, the Guru is also the innermost form of the disciple's heart. When you take a step forward towards the Guru, your Atmadev (the Ishwara who is your Atma) manifests before you in the form of your Guru.

One more point – this is about the *upaasaka* (one who does *upaasanaa* – offers loving devotion to the Ishwara). Have you never, ever, accepted someone as your Guru in any of your innumerable past births? The Guru exists. He is not a destructible object! Your Sadguru is seated in the most subtle recesses of your *antahkarana* (fourfold mind; subtle body), in the form of *sanskaara* (subtle subconscious impressions). You have turned away from him. You have left him and wandered off to roam in the external world. When you become anxious to obtain him, that same Sadguru – who is a form of the Ishwara – will manifest. The Sadguru does not reveal himself as long as you are turned away from him, ignoring him. It is only when you turn towards him eagerly that the Sadguru seated in the subtlest form, in the core of your being manifests.

Our Shri Udiya Babaji Maharaj used to say, 'Look; I am seated in the *hridaya* (heart) of my *shishya* (disciple). I will not become Mukta (liberated from the cycle of rebirth) until my shishya obtains Mukti

(liberation from the cycle of rebirth); I will be seated in his heart, and so, I will be *baddha* (bound) as long as he is baddha. I am Mukta by my own *svaroopā* (essence; true form), but that form of mine – which is imprisoned in the heart of my shishya – is dependent on my shishya. The inner Guru becomes Mukta only after making the shishya Mukta.’ Yes; it is just like the Parameshwara who abides in our heart.

*Aachaaryaade`va viditaa vidyaa saadhishtham praapta,
na nare`na avare`na prokta e`sha suvigne`yo yanu e`sha dharmah.*

No matter how hard you try, you will never be able to understand the Tattva until your Sadguru gives you the teaching. So, pray every day, ‘O Prabhu! Please meet me in the form of my Sadguru.’ There should be a longing in your heart to meet your Sadguru.

Listen to some straight talk. If there is a longing for a Sadguru in your heart, you are sure to get him. If you ask, ‘How can I get such a longing?’ the answer is, ‘Keep the company of people who have *shraddhaa* (faith) in their Guru.’ This is the method. Associate with people who have a deep love and reverence for their Guru. The influence of company is very strong. Shraddha gives rise to shraddha. Shraddha will awaken in your heart as a result of associating with those who have Guru-bhakti. Shraddha will give you Gnan. It is true – only a person who has shraddha gets a Sadguru who is the personification of the Sacchidananda (Sat=pure existence, Chit=pure consciousness, Anand=pure bliss) Brahman.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Who Is Greater Than The Guru?

Is there anyone who is greater than the Guru?

Oh! Stop there! It is you, yourself! Look; you feed your Guru and clothe him. You show him the path when walking. You guide him about where he should place his feet as you walk. You explain things to him. You have made him obedient to you. What is the Guru? He is your toy; what else?

There is a shloka in the Yoga Vasishtha:

*Eeshvaraastitvanirne`taa tvam tattosi mahe`shvarah,
guroryogyatvanirne`taa tvam tattosi gurorguruh,*

Who is the Judge of the case of the Ishwara? Who decides whether the Ishwara exists or not? Narayana! It is you – you are the one who judges whether there is an Ishwara or not. The Judge seated in the Court of your heart is none other than yourself.

I have no objection to your investigations about the Ishwara. You, yourself, are the Ishwara of the Ishwara – you are Maheshwara (the great Ishwara), because you are the one who decides about His existence. Similarly, you are the one who judges the eligibility of the Guru. Therefore, you are the Guru of the Guru. You and you alone, are the one who is greater than the Guru.

The fact is, until the Guru makes you a Guru, you can take it that you have not got your true Guru. There are plenty of Gurus who make disciples, but a Guru who makes you a Guru is not found easily, you know! When the formal initiation of making a disciple a Sanyasi is done, the *choti* (the sacred tuft of hair) and *janeu* (sacred thread) are

removed. Then the Guru gives the disciple the *daan* (giving in charity; gift), the position of an Acharya (Teacher). He places flowers and sandalwood paste on the disciple's head, and says, '*Tvame`va saakshaat brahmaasi* – you are the Parabrahm Paramatma incarnate.'

The Guru is not there to make you a disciple. He is there to make you realize your own *svaroopā* (essence; true form) of being the *adveeteeya* (non-dual) Brahman. He is there to scatter the veil of *agnaana* (lack of Gnan) that hides your true Self from yourself. The purpose of your Guru is to remove the *bhraanti* (false understanding) caused by *avidyaa* (nescience) that conceals your *brahmsvaroopā* (true form, that of being the Brahman). Your Brahmaswarup is *poorna* (whole; complete in itself), *avinaashee* (indestructible), *vyaapaka* (all-pervading), *akhanda* (not fragmented) and *ananta* (infinite).

Narayana! Know your Self and then you will see that only you exist. All are in you, and you are in all. Nothing exists, but you. Only you exist. Only you – who is one, non-dual, un-fragmented, not separate, *sattaa* (pure existence), Gnan, Anand.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

You, Only You.

Rajarshi (a Raja who is also a Rishi) Janak was about to return to his Capital, after having the *darshan* (see someone you revere) and Satsang (spiritual discourses) of Mahamuni (the great Sage) Ashtavakraji. He had already put his foot in the stirrup and was about to mount, when he heard Shri Ashtavakraji's deep, grave voice.

'O Raja! You are the *nitya* (eternal), *shuddha* (pristine), *buddha* (enlightened), *mukta* (liberated), *adviteeya* (non-dual), Brahman. You are mistaking your body for your Atma, and wandering needlessly in the cycle of rebirth. Set fire to the forest of *agnaana* (lack of Gnan). No *raaga* (attachments), no *bhaaga* (running about needlessly), no *sangraha* (accumulation), no *tyaaga* (giving up). There is only you, you alone.'

Raja Janak stood stultified. What was this?! 'I am the adviteeya Brahman? I am fulfilled!'

The Raja was *kritakritya* (having achieved supreme success). There was nothing more for him to know, do, obtain, or let go of. He was *nirbhaya-nirdvandva* (free of fear-free of dilemmas). The imagined curtain of nescience had been removed forever in a moment! His *nitya-siddha* (eternally achieved) *asangataa* (being un-attached) was revealed. When no other exists, who should there be *aasakti* (attachment) or *virakti* (detachment) for?

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

A False Image Of The Brahman.

Once, I went to meet a Mahatma. He told me, ‘Let go of the thought “I was the Brahman once, but I am not the Brahman.” Also, let go of the thought that you are not the Brahman at present, but will become the Brahman in future. Just as people do *maanasa poojaa* (mental worship), just imagine that you are the Brahman. Just pretend to yourself that you are the *advaya* (non-dual) Tattva (essence) in which space, time and matter have no existence.

Now, see – where are your *prapancha* (interactive world), *maayaa* (the Ishwara’s power of illusion), *avidyaa* (nescience), *jeeva* (an individual; the Atma that believes itself to be a body) in your infinite existence? To imagine that avidya is real is absolutely wrong. Thus, even a false, imagined Brahman has the capacity to make you free of avidya.

Maani maani bandhana mein aayo.

You think you are a jeeva only because of what you have heard people say; you have not seen the *jeevatva* (being a body attached to the Atma). You have deluded yourself into believing that you are bound.

Now, if you imagine a false advaya Brahm-Tattva (the non-dual essence that is the Brahman) your *paapa-punya* (sins-spiritual merit), *sukha-dukha* (happiness-sorrows), *svarga-naraka* (Heaven-Hell), *janma-mrityu* (birth-death) will be cut away. When even a false imagining of that Brahman has such power, just think of what can happen if you get a direct personal experience of Him!’

I took the Mahatma’s words to heart, and my life was benefited by it. Will you also reap the benefit? You too, should give deep thought to the Mahatma’s words, and experience fulfillment in your life.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Satyam Gnanamanantam Brahman.

The Brahman is Satya (pure existence that can never be negated). He is Gnan (pure consciousness). He is Anand (Pure bliss). The Paramatma is Satya, He is *gnaana-svaroopā* (the essence of Gnan), He is *aparichhinna* (not separate; the whole), and *akhanda* (not fragmented).

In social interaction, the things that are experienced by the sense organs are called 'satya' (real). The objects of the senses are *shabda* (sound), *sparsha* (touch), *roopa* (appearance), *rasa* (flavor), *gandha* (fragrance). The gross physical body experiences them and calls them satya. It is the *indreeya* (sense organs) that reveal these to the intellect.

Our different Acharyas (Teachers) have given different definitions to Satya. Some have said that Satya is the minutest particle that remains at the end. Some refute this. They say that Satya is not external. Satya is the *chitta* (mental inclination) through which this whole world is known. Some have said that the *beeja* (seed) is Satya, but in the opinion of others, it is the tree that is Satya. Some say that the Satya changes and some say that Satya is the one who sees.

The Jains believe that the Satya expands and contracts. It is huge when it is an elephant, and tiny when it is an ant. The Satya that becomes an elephant becomes an ant another day. It is enlarged sometimes and it shrinks sometimes.

The Buddhists say that the Paramatma is *shoonya* (nothing, a void). The Vedantis say that that, which can never be negated, in the past, present, or future, is the Satya. The Atma that nobody can negate at any point of time is the Satya.

Where do you seek the Satya? Do you seek it in the grains of the earth? You will not find it there. Do you seek it in the passing moments of Time? You will not find it there either. Do you seek the Satya in any corner of Space? You will fail to find it there.

The Satya is that, which illuminates *kaala* (Time), *de`sha* (space) and *dravya* (matter). It is the substratum of them all. It is the Atma that is the *sarva-adhishthaana* (the substratum of all) and *sarvaavabhaasaka* (illuminator of all), and is *svayamprakaasha* (self-effulgent). It is you, your Self. You are the one and only Satya. See your Self, in yourself, by yourself. You are the *tri-kaala-aabhaadhita* (that, which cannot be negated in any of the three tenses) Atma-Satya. You are the Satya that is your Atma.

Vedanta means the Upanishads. The Upanishads mean the - *apaurushe`ya gnaana* (Gnan that is not created by any human being). The *maayaa* (the Ishwara's power of illusion) of this apaurusheya Gnan is extraordinary. The original *roopa* (form; appearance) of Gnan is that, which cannot be created; nor can it be destroyed. It is not real Gnan. The Vedantis characterized Gnan as *abaadhita* – that, which can never be negated.

Nobody can cast off his *aslee svaroop*a (original essence; true form). If Gnan casts off its own swarup and changes, increases or decreases, there will be a *saakshee* (witness) who will be separate from that Gnan. So much so, that Gnan has not been created even by the Ishwara.

Someone may say, 'Since the Ishwara has created the whole world, He must also have created Gnan.' Isn't it so? Very well; tell me – when the Ishwara created this world, did He do so with Gnan, or with *agnaana*

(lack of Gnan)? Narayana! Gnan has always existed. Gnan is that, about whose absence of existence can never be established.

Look; there are plenty of *naastika* (atheists), and they declare, 'There is no Ishwara.' Yes, but can anyone declare, 'I don't exist'? Can anyone even think, 'I don't exist'? You can neither say nor think this, because you are; you exist.

So then, my brother, what is Satya?

Abaadhitatvam satyatvam' – the *baadha* (negation) of which is not possible, is the Satya. No daring mother's darling, no learned expert, no Gnani, no Tattvagnani (one who has Gnan about the Tattva – the essence of the Brahman) can come to the conclusion that the Satya is *mithyaa* (false, a relative truth). Had Satya been separate from Gnan, it would be *jada* (insensate matter). And, yes! If there is Gnan, but not Satya, the Gnan will become *kshanika* (momentary; fleeting). It will keep breaking from moment to moment. If the Satya is not Gnan, it will be *jada*, and if the Gnan is not Satya it will be transient. Both characteristics – Satya and Gnan – must be combined. This is exactly what is said in the Upanishads – *Satyam gnaanam, gnaanam satyam*, and *anantam* (infinite) applies to both.

Anantam satyam, anantam gnaanam. Satya has no *aadi* (beginning) and no *anta* (end). If there is no beginning and no end there can be no middle either. It is the same with Gnan. The *chit-svaroopam* (the essence that is pure consciousness) is the *adhishtana* (substratum) that has no beginning, no middle, and no end, is the Satya Gnan.

Ananta means that, which is *aparichhinna* (not separated) by *de'sha* (place), *kaala* (time) and *vastu* (object). Space and time cannot be

known unless matter exists. An object has length and breadth. Time is imagined in an object that has length and breadth. When the object changes it becomes the *karma* (the serial order in which the mutation takes place). Karma leads to imagining the *kaala* (time). If there were no objects to be seen, there would be no space or time either.

Vedanta does not accept space and time as *dravya* (matter; substance). The philosophies of Nyaya and Vaisheshik accept desha-kaala as dravya. They accept it as material, as a substance. For them, dravya, *guna* (qualities), and the karma have equal importance. Within them are the *prithivee* (earth), *aapa* (water), *te`ja* (effulgence), *vaayu* (wind), *aakaasha* (space; sky), *dik* (the directions), *kaala* (time), the Atma, and *maanansi* (emotional mind).

Vedanta does not accept space and time as substances. Length and breadth are called desha. When one follows another, and a third follows the second, it is called the *krama* (the serial order in which the events take place), and this krama is called kaala. The knowledge of that, which grows from a small size to its full size is called desha, and the knowledge of the krama is called kaala.

Satyam gnaanam anantam brahma. Now, give your mind to one point. If Satyam is separate from you, it will be unconscious. If you want to get rid of your restlessness, know that your Atma is the Satya, and it is *gnaana-svaroop*a (the essence that is Gnan). The Atma is Satya-swarup, Gnan-swarup, ananta-swarup. It is not fragmented by space, time, or matter. It is the Brahman. The Atma-vastu is *a-baadhita* (cannot be negated) *chinmaatra* (pure consciousness) without the constraints of any beginning, middle, or end. And, it is called the Brahman.

Make some effort to recognize the Atma. Some methods have been given to help you in your efforts to recognize your Brahm-swarup. ‘*Yato vaa imaani bhootaani jaayante*.’ ‘*Aanandaade`vaimaani bhootaani jaayante*.’ ‘*Vignaanaade`vaimaani bhootaani jaayante*.’ These are methods for helping you to understand your *adviteeya* (non-dual) Brahm-Tattva.

There is one more point. The *rahasya* (secrets; hidden meaning) of the Shrutis (Vedic verses) are not revealed when a person reads them on his own. To understand the science, the method, and experience the Shrutis, you should go to a Sadguru (an enlightened Guru who is in a position to give you the right spiritual guidance and clear your doubts).

Tadvignaanaarthame`va gurume`vaabhigachhe`t,
‘Tadvignaarthame`va, tasye`va vignaartham, na tu anyasya.’ Go to him with no other intention than obtaining the Gnan of the Brahman. ‘*Gurume`va, na tu anyam kashchana*’ – go only to your Guru, and not to anyone else. Go to your Guru with an inclination to please him. You should not think of ways of arguing with what he says; you should first think about what he tells you with an inclination to understand its purport. This is called *manana*.

You should first understand the viewpoint of your Guru. With what feeling has your Guru told you such and such? What was the purport and reference of what he said? If your viewpoint corresponds with his, you have achieved something truly worthwhile.

Match your thinking with the viewpoint with which your Guru sees the Ishwara, the *jeeva* (an individual who does not realize that he is the Atma, not the body) and the *prapancha* (interactive world), and let

your *drishti* (viewpoint) be the same. You will see that only you exist. Nothing else exists, except your Self. '*Ahame`ve`dam sarvam.*'

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Neither Is This Satya Nor Is That Satya.

Raja Janak was asleep in his palace. He had a dream. It was a strange dream. In the dream, he was an impoverished beggar. He had not eaten for three days. Somehow, he got a little rice and lentils. He began to cook them in an earthen pot. Two bulls came by, fighting. The pot was overturned and shattered, spilling the grain. Raja Janak's sleep was broken and the scene vanished. He saw his palace, his luxurious bed, and the rich furnishings.

The question rose in Raja Janak's mind, 'Is this Satya (real; the truth) or is that (the dream) the Satya?' He was unable to decide whether the waking state was Satya, or whether the dream state was the Satya.

Raja Janak called for a discussion of learned people to resolve this question. Many learned Pundits began to attend, in the hope of getting the rich prize offered to the person who gave the solution. The question in Raja Janak's mind was discussed, but it remained unanswered. Nobody was able to give a satisfactory answer to, 'Is this Satya or was that Satya?' The condition for participating in the discussion was that if a contestant failed to give the answer, he would be drowned.

Ultimately, Maha Muni (the great Sage) Ashtavakraji arrived at Janak's assembly. His twisted body and ungainly walk were such that everyone present succumbed to laughter. Even Raja Janak could not stop himself from smiling. Shri Ashtavakraji asked, in a deep, grave voice, 'What is the object that makes you laugh? Is it the matter of which this gross physical form is made – the five elements, particles, *prakriti* (Nature), *maayaa* (the Ishwara's power of illusion), or the Parabrahm?

My brother, there are no differences in these. We are all made of the same basic matter. If you are laughing at the Parameshwara who made this form, there is no cause for you to laugh at Him. His Creation, His skill in making the diversity in this world is to be appreciated.'

The whole assembly became serious. This awkward, ungainly youth filled them with awe. The truth is that Gnan does not depend on the form; nor is it within the jurisdiction of any particular person. Gnan is always self-effulgent.

The fact was that there was an urgent need for *vidvaana* (learned people) in Varuka Loka (the realm of Varuna Devta, who is the presiding deity of water). Varuna had sent his most learned scholar to Raja Janak's Court. Every time he defeated someone in *shaasthaartha* (a theological debate), the loser would be drowned. Varuna's courtiers would receive the man with great respect and escort him to Varuna's Court. Ashtavakraji's father, Kohal Rishi was one of them. When Ashtavakraji heard about his father's defeat and drowning, he came to Janak's Court to challenge Varuna's scholar to a shastrartha. The subject currently under discussion was, 'Was that Satya or is this Satya?' The problem had not yet been resolved by anyone till then.

Maha Muni Ashtavakraji announced, 'Neither is this Satya, nor is that Satya. The *adhishtaana* (substratum) on which both the waking state and the dreaming state are superimposed is the only Satya. Everything is seen in the light of the self-effulgent Satya, which is the only Satya. The Sat-adhishtana (the Satya that is the substratum of everything) and the *chit-prakaasha* (the light of the pure consciousness that shows us everything) are one and the same, and it is our Atma. This, that, I, and you are all *mithyaa* (a relative truth).'

The Yagna that was being held at Varuna Loka had been completed. Kohal Rishi had been liberated. Janak's whole Court resounded with cries of '*Mahaa muni ashtavakraji ki jai!* – Victory to the great Muni Ashtavakraji!'

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Birbal's Calculation Of Crows.

Akbar Badshah asked Birbal, 'How many crows are there in my kingdom?'

'To count and calculate this will take time and substantial funding,' replied Birbal.

The Badshah supplied several thousand rupees. Days passed. Whenever Akbar asked Birbal about the matter, he would say, 'This counting is not over yet.'

Some days later, Birbal told the Badshah, 'Jahanpanah! The calculation is complete.' He named a figure of six digits. 'What if the crows are found to be more or less than the amount named by you?' asked Akbar.

Birbal was very clever. 'Hujoor!' he replied promptly, 'if you find more crows than this, you can take it that they are visitors from neighboring States, and if you find fewer crows, it means that some of our crows have gone visiting to other States.' The Badshah was pleased with Birbal's answer.

Just as Birbal's calculation about the crows was *mithyaa* (false; imagined), this *sansaara* (interactive world) is also *mithya*. All the *vidhi-nishe'dha* (instituted-forbidden actions) in the Shastras are like Birbal's visiting crows. They are given to awaken the *agnaani* (those who lack Gnan). The fact is that this world has no existence. It is a sport; it is like a dream. If, in this dream, someone opens a book and says, 'Do this. Don't do this. That is the rule of the Shastras,' it is the same as the waking state.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Swachata-Pavitrata.

A question is raised – the Shastras forbid us to do any act of Dharma with the left hand. We should use the right hand when we do puja, give in charity, eat, etc. What is the reason behind this stricture? If a good action done with the left hand does not give *punya* (spiritual merit) will a wrong act done with the right hand give *paapa* (sin)?

Narayana! What is it that you want? Please tell me what you feel inclined to do. If you are unable to do anything with your right hand, use your left hand. What is the problem?

Paapa is bad, whether done with the right hand or the left. The fact is, it is good to keep people on your right hand; it is not good to keep them to your left. If you keep a person to your left, he becomes your opponent.

One more thing – this is also very helpful in developing discrimination regarding *pavitrataa* (purity as per the Shastras) and *a-pavitrataa* (impurity according to the Shastras). When you use your left hand to clean yourself, then you use your right hand to do the rituals of worship.

Two divisions are created here – one is *svacchataa* (cleanliness) and the other is pavitrata. You should have *vive`ka* (discrimination) about the two. First, wash your dhoti in tap water – it will become swacha (clean), and then wash it in Gangajal (water from the holy Gangaji) – it will become pavitra.

Rules have been instituted in all matters for the purpose of establishing discrimination about cleanliness and purity. Use whatever means you have for having both in your life, and do pavitra actions.

The fruit of a good action will always be good, whichever hand it is done with. Good deeds always give good fruits.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Ishtadeva – Kuladeva.

The question is asked: what is the difference between the Ishtadeva (the form chosen for worship) and the Kuladev (the deity worshipped traditionally in the family)?

Narayana! A relationship with the Kuladeva is established through the worship by generation after generation. The image worshipped by our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents is called the Kuladeva (the Devta of the Kula, meaning, family). From the viewpoint of inherited tradition, it is Dharma to worship the Kuladeva. We should also fear the Kuladeva. We should always remember that our Kuladeva will be displeased if we do anything that is wrong, and therefore, we should always do good deeds to keep our Kuladeva pleased. Yes! There should always be someone whose fear impels us to do good deeds.

I sometimes get the thought about how the work I am doing will seem to my Guruji. Will he approve of it or not? This is the litmus test. If my Guruji sees my work, hears about it, recognizes it, and feels that it is good, the work is good. If he disapproves, what I am doing is bad. I have merged my opinion with my Guruji's. My inclination was merged with my Guruji's inclination. It is such a simple way to gauge whether the work is good or not!

Similarly, what should we eat? Look – can this item be offered to Bhagwan or not? If it is something that you cannot offer to Bhagwan in *bhoga* (food offered first to Bhagwan and then had as *prasaada* – a blessing), don't eat it. Control your tongue. Tell people that your *aadhyaatmika* (spiritual) doctor has forbidden you to eat that substance. You may say the word 'adhyatmik' inaudibly, and 'doctor'

audibly! Don't say 'Guru', because foreigners don't understand this word. Tell them that your psychologist has told you not to eat this.

Thus, it is the *kasauti* (test) of your *karma* (actions) to think whether your Guru will be pleased with your actions, or displeased. The test of food is whether it can be offered as bhog to Bhagwan or not. It is not that you do whatever you feel like doing, thinking that Guruji will never know about it. Even the passing breeze knows what we do! There is no action in this world that is not known to anyone at all. The Kuladeva is a Devta who is worshipped by the tradition of your lineage. You should worship him. You should offer the food to him before you eat.

Very well; now, what is the Ishtadeva? The Ishtadeva is the one to whom we want to offer up our life. 'Ishta' means *yajana* – the act of sacrifice, like offering oblations into the sacred fire. We say '*ishtapoorti*', don't we, at the conclusion of a successful Yagna? Yajan means that, to whom you are prepared to give your all. A person will not work with a sole purpose in life until he gets an Ishta (desired object). The Ishtadeva is given by the *aagnyaa* (order; command) of the Guru; not at our own whim. If you select your Ishtadeva on an impulse, you may leave him (or her) some day. The Ishtadeva should never be lost. There must be firmness about this.

No matter what happens, we should never let go of our Ishtadeva. Our life should always be surrendered totally to our Ishtadeva. Just as a devoted wife never leaves her husband, a bhakta should never leave his Ishtadeva. It should not be that the sight of someone young and attractive and talented makes you change your Guru and your Ishtadeva.

It was in 1947. I had gone to Amritsar and spent the *chaaturmaasya* (the four months of the rainy season when Monks stay at one place) there. The first thing I was told by the local ladies was, ‘Swamiji, you have not given up your *maalaa* (necklace; prayer beads) yet.’ I used to wear a rudraksha mala.

‘Oh, you people disapprove of my mala!’ I said. They were all staunch Vedantis! (Rudraksha is worn by the worshippers of Shankar Bhagwan.) They approved of me in everything else, but disapproved of my wearing a rudraksha mala!

A few days later, they came to me in a group, bringing flowers, garlands, *chandana* (sandalwood) paste, *akshat* (grains of uncooked rice) etc asking me to give them a mantra (formal spiritual initiation). There were some twenty or twenty five ladies, and some men. The ladies all wore saris of the same color – it was either red or yellow. I asked the people there, ‘What is the event?’ I was told, ‘Whenever a Mahatma comes here, these people take a mantra from him. They always come in this manner, and ask every Mahatma to give them a mantra.’

Narayana! You talk about the Ishtadeva! This is not some Club of a Cinema house. Just as a marriage takes place between the husband and wife, we have an Ishtadeva on whom our mind is focused. It is just like that!

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Rukmini – Krishna.

Nobody says, ‘Rukmini – Krishna’; everybody says ‘Radha – Krishna’. Why is that?

Narayana! It seems that you have never gone to Pandharpur or Dwarika! Among the Shri Krishna mantras, is the mantra ‘*Rukminivallabhaaya namah.*’ (I bow down to the one loved by Rukmini.) Furthermore, thirty or thirty five mantras of Shri Krishna are given in the Sanatkumar Samhita. ‘*Radhaavallabha*’ (Beloved of Radha) is one of them. ‘*Rukminivallabhaaya svaahaa*’ (this is offered to the Beloved of Rukmini) is another, the *beeja akshara* (the root syllable) of which is ‘*kleem, kreem, hreem*’. I suggest you go on a visit to Pandharpur, and get the darshan (see someone you revere) of Rukminiji. You will see how the puja of Rukminivallabha Shri Krishna is done. Go to Dwarika on a visit, and see how beautifully Shri Krishna is dressed!

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Sita – Rukmini.

If you give your attention to the *moola tattva* (the basic essence), Rukmini is the *svarna-lakshmee* (the golden Laxmi, consort of Vishnu Bhagwan, the goddess of Grace and prosperity) and Sita is the *krishi-lakshmee* (the Laxmi of agriculture). We read a mantra in the Shree Sukta:

*Gandhadvaaraam duraadharshaam nityapushtaam kareeshineem,
eeshvareem sarvabhootaanaam taamihopahavaye`shriyam.*

This is the Krishi Laxmi; the wealth procured by farming is our wealth. It is our all-in-all. Its method is described here. *Kareesha* means *khaada* – fertilizer. Spreading cow dung on fields is an excellent fertilizer. Fertile earth is needed. This Krishi Laxmi is Sita. The earth is tilled with a plough. The grain that is reaped is Sita incarnate. It is the Krishi Laxmi. It should never be disrespected.

In Sanskrit, ‘rukmi’ means gold. Rukmini means the Swarna Laxmi. Bhishmak is Rukmini’s father. Bhishmak means the sea. Rukmini’s brother is Rukmi – he is the venom that manifested first in the episode of the Samudra Manthan – the churning of the sea. Rukmini is the Swarna Laxmi herself!

If we wish to make ourselves fortunate it is necessary to have Swarna Laxmi as our movable wealth, and Krishi Laxmi as our immovable wealth. To be prosperous, we need food as well as money. Sita is the *adhishtaatree de`vee* (presiding goddess) of food. Therefore, both Sita – the giver of food, and Rukmini – the giver of gold, should always be respected and worshipped.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Bharatvarsha – Teerthabhoomi.

Bharatvarsha (India) is the *hridaya* (heart) of the *prithivee* (earth). This beloved country is famous for its many special qualities. It is endowed with huge mountains, large rivers, dense forests, and many products that are mined. Its six seasons frolic all the year round. It is difficult indeed to describe the various attributes that range from the peaks of the Himalayas, and Assam, to Sindh in the West.

The Sindh Region.

The *pavitra* (pure according to the Shastras) region of the Western borders of Bharatvarsha, kissed by the river Sindhu, is called the Sindh Pradesh. The horses and salt of Sindh are world famous. From the viewpoint of tradition and culture it is an excellent part of our country, even though politics and religious influences have now placed it within the borders of Pakistan. History is witness to the fact that this region was the *leelaa-bhoomi* (playground) of many Mahatmas, birthplace of many successful businessmen, and a land of great wealth and prosperity. It has also been a *teertha-bhoomi* (place of pilgrimages) because of the many pavitra places that come within this region.

Shri Dwarika-Dham.

Dwarika is one of the principal *dhaama* (pilgrim places), and *puri* (city) of the four dhams and seven puris in Bharatvarsha. It is on the Western coast, and comes within the State of Saurashtra. It is like the *pratyagaatmaa* (our own Atma) of Bharatvarsha.

The meaning of the words '*pashchim*' (West) and '*pratyak*' (known, as a personal experience) in Sanskrit is very similar. This is why Dwarika became Shri Krishna's place of abode in His later life. You see, every

Mahapurusha becomes established in his pratyagatma in the final part of his *saadhanaa* (spiritual journey) and *leela* (frolic).

One amazing fact about Saurashtra is that this is where Chandrama (the Moon, who is a Devta) was liberated from the *shaapa* (curse) given by Daksha. Chandrama is the *adhide`vtaa* (presiding deity) of the *mana* (emotional mind). The *indreeya* (senses) – Rohini and other daughters of Daksha – are Chandrama's wives.

When the mana develops a relationship with the indreeyas, and becomes *bhogaasakta* (attached to sensual indulgences), Dharma gives it a shaap, and it becomes pale and thin. Where does Chandrama get liberated from this curse? It is on the Western shores of the sea, meaning, in the pratyagatma.

How?

By doing the *aaraadhanaa* (worship) of Somnath Bhagwan (Shivaji's famous temple). *Soma-nath* means the *naatha* (Master) of Soma (the elixir that bestows immortality). There, the *tvam-padaartha* (tvam = you, the Atma; padartha=object) and the *tat-padaartha* (tat=That, the Brahman) are worshipped as one. This is why the Adhidevta Chandrama and the *aadhyaatma* (metaphysical) mana get *shaanti* (peace) and Mukti (liberation).

It is also worth keeping in mind that this *pashchim* (Western) shore of the *samudra* (sea) is where Shri Krishna gave up His physical form. The place where the *saakaara* (with form) turns into the *niraakaara* (formless) is the pratyagatma.

Because of these reasons – being Shri Krishna's abode, Dwarika, Somnath, the place where Shri Krishna gave up His physical form –

Saurashtra's teerthas have great importance. Only some fortunate people get the opportunity to get the darshan (see a revered object), and bathe in these teerthas.

Shri Rameshwara Dham.

Shri Rameshwara Dham is one of the four principal Dhams. This sublime spot is situated on the shore of the Southern sea. This Shivalinga was established by Bhagwan Shri Rama, who is worshipped by the Vaishnavas (devotees of Bhagwan Vishnu). It is a symbol of the goodwill between the Vaishnavas and the Shaivites (devotees of Bhagwan Shiva). It is also a silent message from Shri Rama to the devotees of Shiva in Lanka that He is an opponent of Ravana because he is an opponent of Dharma; but that He, Shri Rama, has nothing against those who worship Shankar Bhagwan. Shri Rama has only respect for them.

Shri Vrindavan Dham.

Shri Vrindavan Dham is the realm of *pre`ma* (pure love) and *aananda* (joyousness). There is music in the speech of every being of Vraja (the area around Vrindavan), and the rhythm of dance in their movements!

Shri Radha-Krishna frolic sweetly with the young *gwaala-baala* (cowherd boys) and *gopee* (milkmaids) in every lane and arbor. Wherever you go, you are reminded of some *leela* (frolic) of Shri Krishna. There is the Raman Reti, the place of the Cheer-Haran, the Vanshi Vat, the Seva Kunj, Nidhivan, the Brahm-Kund, the Govind-Kund, the Davanal-Kund, etc. Seeing them and hearing about the leelas connected to them, the heart is filled with the sweetness of Shri Krishna's playful antics. Shri Vrindavan Dham is the sweet place where Shri Radha-Krishna frolicked in divine ecstasy.

Haridwar-Rishikesh.

Haridwar and Rishikesh are the land of Gnan and *vairagya* (renunciation). They are situated on the slopes of the Himalaya, on the banks of the Holy Gangaji. A feeling of sublime peace rises in the heart as soon as one goes there.

Many great Mahatmas and Gnanis have lived there. Many live there even today. Mahatmas have built large Ashrams there, for the benefit of people. People go there just to get the Satsang (spiritual discourses) of the Mahatmas, and purify their hearts. They get bhakti and Tattvagnan (Gnan about the Tattva – the essence of the Brahman). Kailash Ashram is a large Ashram at Rishikesh. Its focus is the Brahmavidya (knowledge about the Brahman). Swami Prempuriji was the Mahamandaleshwara (Head) there earlier.

Bharatvarsha is a *teertha-bhoomi*. Doing a *teertha-yatra* (journey of pilgrimages) in Bharatvarsha purifies the *antahkaran* (fourfold mind or subtle body). The young forests, mountains, lakes, temples, Ashrams, etc bring the thought, 'This belongs to Bhagwan.' Feelings of ownership and acquisitive tendencies prevail when we live in cities and see the magnificent buildings and beautiful parks; the feeling that everything belongs to Bhagwan prevails when we go on a pilgrimage. Worldly worries are forgotten; we are reminded constantly of Bhagwan. Pavitrata (purity) rises in our life.

If, during a *teertha-yatra*, a person gets the *darshan* (sees a revered object) and Satsang of enlightened Mahatmas, it multiplies the joy and benefits of the journey.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

The Irony Of Life.

Bhagwan is seated in our heart. He is our well-wisher. He speaks to us. Yes! It is another matter that we are unable to hear His *vaanee* (speech; words) even though He is in our heart.

Do you know why we can't hear it? It is because we are too busy listening to the talk of others, or talking about others, or talking to others about ourselves!

The irony of our life is that Bhagwan – who is seated within our heart – talks to us, because of His *kripaa-karunaa* (Grace-compassion), and we have the misfortune to be immersed in being engrossed in mundane matters!

Another point is that at times it is Bhagwan who speaks, and at times it is our *vaasanaa* (lust; avid desire) that speaks. How can we recognize which speech is Bhagwan's and which is the prodding of our desires?

Some highly evolved Mahatmas had gathered on the bank of the Gangaji. A question was raised. 'A voice rises from within, but we don't know whether it is Bhagwan speaking or our *vasana*. How can we make sure that it is the voice of Rama and not the voice of *kaama* (desire)?'

The Satsang (spiritual discussion) went on for a long time. Ultimately, the Mahatmas came to a conclusion. What is said for our friends or foes is not Bhagwan's *vani*. This entire Creation is Bhagwan's *svaroopa* (essence; true form). From the viewpoint that everything is an illusion superimposed upon the substratum that is the Brahman, Bhagwan is the Atma of all; and from the viewpoint that there is no substratum, this *sansaara* (interactive world) does not exist. *Sarvaatmaa bhaava* (the feeling that Bhagwan is the Atma of all) is in the belief that

everything is temporary, illusionary, and superimposed on the Brahman, the substratum of all that exists. Furthermore, the Brahman is not separate from the Atma.

Bhagwan is *hita-svaroopā* (the essence of universal benevolence; wanting the good of all). He does not want anyone to be harmed. Bhagwan is *mangalmaya* (filled with all that is auspicious); He is *kalyaana-svaroopā* (the essence of good fortune). He will say nothing that can harm any being. Bhagwan's vani never inflicts any blow on anybody's *astittva* (existence), Gnan, or anand. Bhagwan's vani contains *sadbhaava* (goodwill), *chid-bhaava* (consciousness, wisdom), *aananda-bhaava* (happiness) and *advaya-bhaava* (non-duality).

Bhagwan is *sacchidaananda-advaya-svaroopā* (the non-dual essence of Sat=pure existence, Chit=pure consciousness, Anand=pure bliss). His speech is always, everywhere, totally, and completely filled with Sacchidananda.

Narayana! A man was doing *bhajan* (meditating lovingly on Bhagwan). He heard an *aakasha-vaani* (celestial voice). 'My son! Now you should get married.' He went to a Mahatma and told him about his experience. The Mahatma smiled. 'My son! This is the voice of kama; it is not the vani of Rama! You should apply yourself with renewed vigor to doing Bhagwan's bhajan.'

I used to go for the Gita Jayanti celebrations. I would go from Vrindavan to the Gita Mandir in Mathura. One year, I set off before daybreak. I was alone. Suddenly I saw a falling star. This was when India and Pakistan were being formed. A voice rose in my heart, 'Now Jinnah will die.' A few days later, Gandhiji was killed. It is possible that some ill-will

for Jinnah was present in my heart, and therefore the voice spoke about Jinnah's death.

Narayana! When the voice in our heart says something that is in keeping with our conscious or subconscious desires, it is the voice of kama. When the voice says something that is contrary to our inclinations, that is Bhagwan's vani. Bhagwan's vani is heard when the heart is free of desires or preferences. The heart has to be simple and straightforward, limpid and free of artifice, for Bhagwan's voice to be heard.

This happened a long time ago. I had gone to a Mahatma when I was very young. He told me a story about a Raja. A Raja went to visit a Rishikul (school). There he saw a bright boy, intelligent, alert, well-mannered, and earnest about his studies. Impressed by the child, the Raja asked about his background. The headmaster told him that the boy was an orphan.

The Raja was childless. He made up his mind to adopt the boy and make him the heir to the throne, but he did not tell anyone about his decision. He told the headmaster that he would bear all the expenses for the boy, and instructed that the boy should be given the best education and upbringing.

The boy was diligent in his work. 'I am a penniless orphan,' he thought. 'I must study hard and get a good job to sustain myself.' When his studies were completed, he was summoned to the Royal Court. He came before the Raja with folded hands. The Raja told him to come and sit beside him on the throne.

The boy bent his head. ‘Raja Saheb,’ he said, ‘how can I be so impudent? How can I sit beside you?’

The Raja looked at the boy lovingly. ‘My child, you are my Yuvaraj (Crown Prince) and heir to the throne. Come; come to me, my son, and sit beside me.’

Narayana! Bhagwan has already said to us, ‘*Suhridam sarvabhootaanaam*’ (I am the well-wisher of all) in the Gita, but who is your *suhrid* (well-wisher)? Do you recognize your real well-wisher?

Bhagwan knows that He is the master, father, son, brother, friend, and the all-in-all of all beings; but you don’t know the *jeevana-sarvasva* (all in all of our life) *hridaye`shvara* (the Ishwara in the heart). Bhagwan is hidden in the hriday (heart) and speaks to us even without our asking.

Look; it is a rule of the Dharma Shastra that you should give advice only when asked for it – *naa prishtah kasyachid brooyaat*. That is fine. The rule of the Dharma Shastra is very good. However, my brother, *Anaaprishtamapi brooyaaah guravo deenavatsalaah* – when a Guru, or father, sees his disciple or son veering towards the wrong path, they speak without being asked. *Kam vaarthamaapto manujo labhe`tanipaatayanashtadrisham hi garte`* - will any decent man allow a blind man to fall into a ditch? Therefore, Bhagwan speaks to us all.

But when? He speaks to us when we are silent. When the *vaikharee vaanee* (the power to articulate speech) and the *madhyamaa vaanee* (the intermediate part of speech) become silent, the inner voice rises from the *paraa vaanee* (the source of speech). Bhagwan’s speech is heard in our *mauna* (complete silence of mind and voice).

Very well – tell me, who is the *saarathee* (driver) of your *jeevana-ratha* (the chariot of your life)? Is it *nara* (a human) or is it Narayana? When you make Narayana the guide of your life, He speaks to you and gives you guidance.

The fact is that Narayana is the *adviteeya svaroop*a (non-dual essence). He is neither the *rathee* (the owner of the chariot; the body), nor the *sarathi*. By nature, Bhagwan is *tatasth*a-kootastha (unmoving and unaffected) *svayam-prakaasha* (self-effulgent). People can think, say and do whatever they like; He gives no directions to anyone. Nor does He stop anyone.

Yes! There is one point – Bhagwan is *sharanaagata-vatsal* – He has motherly love for those who take refuge in Him. He is an ocean of compassion, inclined to bestow Grace on those who have love for Him. When anyone seeks refuge at His lotus-feet, He lifts them up and embraces them, and talks to them.

Bhagwan feels a motherly love for His bhaktas. ‘He is My own child, and about to fall into a pit.’ Bhagwan’s heart melts. It is filled with compassion, and He speaks for the good of His child.

Narayana! Bhagwan Graces us by talking to us, but only a person whose heart is free of desire, is serene, silent, and surrendered to Him, can hear.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Nishkama And Nishprayojan.

Nishkaama (free of selfish desire) and *nishprayojana* (purposeless) are two different words, with two different meanings.

A nishkama karma (an action not motivated by personal gain) can be *sa-prayojana* (with a purpose). Action is futile unless it is connected to some purpose. Therefore, work should have an *adhikaaree* (eligible person), *vishaya* (subject), *sambandha* (relationship with what is to be achieved by it) and *prayojana* (the need for it).

If you do business, there is a desire to earn wealth. If you get married, there is a desire for sensual indulgences. If you do *dharma-karmaanushthaana* (rituals of worship instituted by Dharma), there is a desire for obtaining some benefit, either in this world or in the hereafter. Even when you do Satsang (listen to spiritual discourses), you are prompted by a desire for Moksha (liberation from the cycle of rebirth). Even when you love someone, you have a desire to please the one you love, because the happiness of the Beloved makes you feel happy. Is it not so?

My brother, not even a fool does anything without having a reason for doing it. Had nishkama karma been nishprayojan, people would have sat on the bank of a river, beating the water with a stick! That would be a karma that was both nishkama and nishprayojan – a waste of energy! It would not be a *sadhana* (method for spiritual progress). It would not take you further on your spiritual journey.

Thus, an action that has no purpose achieves nothing. What is prayojan? *Avagatam sat aatmani ishyate`* - that, when we know it, we want to retain it, is prayojan. *Nishkaamataa* (being free of selfish

desires) is also a prayojan. We wish to destroy desires and keep our heart nishkama.

I used to work in the editorial department of a journal. One Mahatma took offence over some trifle and refused to contribute articles. I was asked to go and appease him.

‘I have heard that only Mahatmas contribute to your publication?’ he asked.

‘Yes, all the people involved are highly respected, spiritual people,’ I said.

‘I have heard that they all do nishkama karma?’

‘Yes. None of them are motivated by considerations of personal gain or fame.’

‘Tell me one thing,’ he said. ‘Suppose the Government were to shut down the publication, would your Board be upset or not?’

‘Yes, they would be upset.’

‘Had they been totally nishkama, why would they be affected by the closure of the journal?’

What was I to say?

Aasakti (attachment) is of four kinds.

1. *Falaasakti* – a desire for the fruit.
2. *Karmaasakti* – attachment to the work.
3. *Kartrittvaasakti* – attachment to working.
4. *Akartrittvasakti* – attachment to the subtle ego of not being the doer of the work.

These four have eight divisions, and then there are two divisions of each of the eight, totaling in sixteen divisions.

We want payment for the work we do. This is *fala-aasakti*. We may not desire money as payment, but we have a desire for the work to be completed successfully – this is *karma-aasakti*. The feeling, ‘I am doing this work’, is *kartrittva-aasakti*. It is pride to think, ‘I am the karta who is doing the work.’ Would we have the capacity to do anything, had there been no space, light, air, earth, body, etc? Therefore, the pride of *kartaapana* (doership) is *mithyaa* (false).

One Mahatma told me, ‘If you are reciting some *paatha* (passage), and the Ishwara tells you to stop talking, would you have any hesitation in obeying Him?’

‘Not the slightest,’ I replied.

One Mahatma told me, ‘I have no control over the karma I do. Anyone can stop me forcibly. To think that I am an *a-kartaa* (not the doer) is *akartrittva-aasakti*; it is a kind of inverted pride.’

Narayana! We are not free in obtaining the fruits of our actions; it is not in our hands to get the fruit. We will get it when the Ishwara gives it.

We are not independent in completing any work we undertake. When we have Time in our hand, we will be capable of knowing that it is in our power, or not in our power, that the work is completed.

The pride of thinking, ‘It is not I who does the work’ is completely false. It only brings tension to the mind.

Let go of all these four attachments. Put in your best effort with the right prayojan. ‘The fruit of the karma will be good. The Ishwara will be

pleased with me for doing this. The work must be done as a service to Bhagwan. This work will purify my *antahkarana* (fourfold mind, subtle body).’ This is the prayojan.

You should always keep in mind that the karma you do is *pavitra* (pure according to the Shastras), and that its fruit is pavitra. If someone says, ‘I am doing this *paapa* (sin) with a *nishkaama bhaava* (without wanting any personal benefit)’, that karma is *a-pavitra* (impure according to the Shastras). Its fruit will be Narak (Hell), an apavitra fruit. The nishkama bhava in it is complete hypocrisy. Sinful acts like stealing, cheating, deceiving, immorality, etc are never nishkama. *Adharma* (that, which is contrary to Dharma) can’t be done unless there is *kaamanaa* (worldly desire) in the mind.

The karma should be good and its fruit should be good, but you shouldn’t depend upon getting the fruit. Vedanta says, ‘You are *sarvaashraya* (the refuge of everything). You are the *rassi* (rope that is mistaken for a snake); you are not the snake that is perceived in what is actually a coiled rope. The rope is the Satya, and it is the *ashraya* (refuge) in which the snake is imagined. The snake is *mithyaa* (false). The Paramatma who is the ashray of this entire interactive world is your *svaroop*a (essence; true form).’

What need is there to elaborate further? A sign is enough for an intelligent person to understand the purport. A person with a *saattvika* (lofty) *buddhi* (intellect) will understand the purport of a few brief words.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

A Mahatma's Viewpoint.

Shri Udiya Babaji Maharaj went to Hathras one night. His host welcomed him joyfully. After he had eaten, the host asked him, 'Baba where will you sleep? I don't have a new mattress or bedclothes to offer a *pavitraatmaa* (person whose heart is pure) like you.' Baba went to his (the host's) bed and went to sleep. From the viewpoint of the householder, he had nothing that was appropriate to offer a Mahatma. From Baba's viewpoint there was no question of *yogya-ayogya* (suitable-unsuitable).

There was a gentleman at Vrindavan who was very agitated because a certain person spoke ill of him. He came to Shri Udiya Babaji Maharaj. 'Maharaj!' he said. 'This man has been maligning me! I want to take revenge on him.'

'Look, my child,' said Baba. 'What is there to take revenge? In six months, this man will be dead. Tolerate him for six months more.' When the man had gone, I asked Baba, 'What is this you told the man?' Baba smiled. 'My son, the man felt happy that his critic would be dead in six months. The thought cooled his anger. By the time six months have passed he won't even remember that the man had spoken ill of him.'

If a person withstands the first rush of *raaga-dve'sha* (attachment-aversion), and does not get swept away by his impulses, he gradually stops being affected by them. Understand this. The gentleman is still living. This incident took place more than thirty years ago!

Once, somebody asked Shri Udiya Babaji Maharaj, 'Baba, is Gnan greater or Bhakti?'

‘Bhakti,’ replied Baba.

‘Then what is Gnan?’

‘In Gnan the difference between greater and smaller doesn’t exist.’

One day, Shri Jaydayalji Goendka said in his Satsang (spiritual discourse), ‘If there is no difference in the behavior of a Gnani (one who has Gnan) and an *agnaanee* (one who lacks Gnan), how will they be different?’

Later, I said to him, ‘Sethji, if a person obtains Gnan and yet the difference between Gnan and agnan remains for him, what Gnan is this?’

Sethji couldn’t help smiling. It is an agnani who sees differences. A Gnani sees everything as the Paramatma. There are no differences in a Gnani’s viewpoint.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

The Prayojan And The Prashnakarta.

The *prashna-kartaa* (the one who asks the question) should be straightforward. The purpose of the question should not be to test the Mahatma. Questions should not be prompted by wrong intentions.

A Punditji came to meet me on one of my visits to Varanasi. 'Please, will you explain the meaning of this shloka?' he asked. 'I am not able to understand it fully.'

'Very well; which shloka is it?' I asked. He recited a shloka.

'This shloka is written by Shri Vallabhacharya,' I said. 'It is from the 'Tattvadeep Nibandha'. It is in reference to the second canto of the Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapurana.' I said.

The Punditji smiled. 'Oh! You even know the source of this shloka! Now there is no need to explain the meaning.'

Narayana! The Punditji had actually come to test me. This is not appropriate, when placing a question to a Mahatma. Questions should be asked to get answers, to clear doubts, or understand things we don't quite grasp. The one who seeks answers should have a straightforward mind.

Sarala svabhaava na mana kutilaayee.

(The questioner should be straightforward. There should be no cunning in his mind.)

Mohin kapata chala chidra na bhaavaa.

(Bhagwan says that He does not like any form of cunning or deceit.)

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Ayu-Vridhhi.

Narayana! When I first met Shri Ghanshyamdasji Birla he has asked me whether I had any *nuskaa* (prescription) for *aayu-vridhhi* (extending the span of life). 'Is there any *upaaya* (method), apart from medical science, by which a man can live longer?' he asked.

I had said to him, 'Take a *mahaa-sankalpa* (great resolution) to accomplish some great task during your lifetime. Apply yourself wholeheartedly to achieving your goal. Your life will be increased.' This conversation has been printed in his memoirs.

Narayana! If you make a firm *sankalpa* (resolve) to accomplish a particular purpose, and apply yourself with all your might and *buddhi* (intellect), your life will be extended for fulfilling your *sankalpa*.

It is not that *aayu* (the span of life) cannot be prolonged. The people in our village know this. When a person lay on his deathbed, he would say repeatedly, 'Take me to Kashi (Varanasi) at once.' The villagers would carry the dying man on a palanquin and set off for Kashi. (It is believed that a person gets liberated from the cycle of rebirth if he dies in Kashi.) On the way the man would open his eyes and ask, 'Have we reached Kashi?'

'No, not yet.'

The man would shut his eyes again. After an hour or so he would ask again. As soon as he was told, 'We have reached Kashi', the man's spirit would leave his body within a few minutes. Narayana! The faith that he would get Moksha if he died in Kashi helped the man stay alive till they reached Kashi.

Thus, if you have a strong urge to fulfill a resolve, which is in keeping with Dharma, you can achieve *aayu-vriddhi* (increase your life). This is the prescription for living longer.

The second question asked by Birlaji was, 'What is *mrityu* (death)?'

I told him, 'From the viewpoint of Paramartha (the Supreme achievement) there is nothing called "mrityu". Neither does the *mitti* (clay) die, nor does the *paani* (water) die, nor does *aaga* (fire) die, nor does the *havaa* (the wind) die, and nor does the *aakaasha* (sky) die. The Tattva (essence) never dies. It is the *aakaara* (physical form) that dies. The form is destroyed, but there is no *mrityu* for the *vastu* (object; the Atma).'

It is possible that some day scientists succeed in making people live for five hundred or a thousand years, but the form will definitely be destroyed one day. However, make some great resolve for your life, and it will lengthen your life. Not only that, it will give you the *buddhi* (intellect) to fulfill that resolve even in your next birth. It will give you *pre`rnaa* (inspiration) and *shakti* (strength) and make you a great *punyaatmaa* (a person with great inner purity and spiritual merit).

Therefore, resolve to do something great and noble in this very life, with a strong ambition to achieve it. Make full use of your *buddhi* and *shakti*, and endeavor to achieve success. This is the *nuskha* for *aayu-vriddhi*.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Manobal.

Your *manobala* (will-power; strength of mind) will increase if there is some *niyama* (self-imposed discipline) in your life.

Make a *niyam* that you will not eat until you have completed a certain amount of *japa* (ritual chanting), some *poojaa* (ritual worship), *paatha* (reciting passages), or *svaadhyaya* (study of the Shastras). The days you are late in completing your routine, you will suffer some discomfort. When you carry out your resolve even though you suffer for it, your manobal will be strengthened. The *mana* (emotional mind) of a person who is not prepared to endure hardships is weakened. This is a general rule.

Now, see another point. Have *shraddhaa* (faith) on someone, that that person will protect you. A soldier fell in battle, but his rifle remained straight, because he did not lose heart. He had the faith that he had the backing of the General and Army, the President and the whole country. He was confident that the Army would follow, assistance would come, and they would win the war.

Thus, whatever work you do, do it with the faith that it has the backing of the Shastras. The Constitution is behind you, your Gurudev is behind you, and Prabhu (Bhagwan) is behind you. Carry out every task with full faith that they will all support you and help you to succeed. When your life contains *shraddha* it will also contain manobal.

Very well; now I will tell you one more thing. When we see others in like plight, our manobal is increased in comparison. For example, suppose you are in a boat and the weather worsens suddenly. The boat begins to rock dangerously. The thought rises in the mind, 'Why am I

afraid? I must be brave and face what comes. Whatever happens will happen to all of us.' That is enough! We gather courage when we see others. This is how our strength of mind is increased when we see others faced with the same kind of difficulties.

Chanting the name of Bhagwan also increases manobal. When you do the *sankeertana* (group singing of Bhagwan's name) portions of your five *kosha* (imaginary sheaths that cover the Atma within) - the *annamaya kosha* (the gross physical sheath), *praanamaya kosha* (the sheath that enables movement), *manomaya kosha* (the sheath of emotions), *vigyaaanamaya kosha* (the sheath of reasoning) and *aanadamaya kosha* (the sheath of bliss) merge. Then they work together to strengthen your mind. Don't consider this to be an ordinary activity.

Thus, to increase your manobal you should adopt some niyam with a firm resolve to adhere to it even at the cost of discomfort or inconvenience. You should have full faith in the support of the constitution of the Shastras, your Gurudev, and the Ishwara. You should carry out the *anushthaana* (ritual of worship) of your *saadhanaa* (method used for spiritual progress) systematically.

When you face problems, think of others who are facing problems – many of which are worse than yours. You should chant Bhagwan's name with your heart filled with love.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Svabhava Vijay.

A gentleman came to visit me. He sat quietly for some time. Then he got an opportunity to speak to me, and asked permission to place his question. The question was, 'I have been associating with Mahatmas for the past fifteen or twenty years, but my *svabhaava* (nature) has not improved. What is the reason? Is it because "*svabhaavo duratikramah*" (it is difficult to change a person's nature), or is it because of my lack of effort? Please guide me.'

I was touched by the man's simplicity, humility, and sincerity. I explained that the svabhava of a person is not his *svaroopa* (essence; true form). Svabhava is created.

The Vedic culture believes that some portion of the svabhava is carried forward from the previous births, some is inherited from parents and grandparents of both sides, and some is the effect of food, lifestyle, association, etc. The svabhava is totally *karma-janya* – it can be created, and changed. Therefore, you should create an excellent nature. The most courageous person is the one who moulds his nature into the nicest and noblest.

A question has been raised in the Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapurana:

What is the most courageous undertaking?

Shri Krishna has given the answer. *Svabhaava-vijayah shauryah* – the most courageous undertaking is to change our svabhava. The most difficult task anyone can undertake is to control his natural impulses and reactions.

If you have unwittingly acquired some habit, you should examine its past and future. Think about the consequences of this habit, and then you can change it. Some people have a habit of using bad words. When I was a young boy, there was a police officer who used such foul language that no decent person would want to repeat it in public. The man would abuse himself, the way people give *gaali* (use bad words) for an enemy. He would take his own name and give *gaalis*. This is not a good habit. It is possible to change it.

If there is a *dosha* (fault) in your *svabhava*, and you are conscious that it should be removed, there is enough dormant *shakti* (strength) in you, in your understanding and resolve, to change your nature successfully.

I have seen people who are utterly spoilt change their *svabhava* and become highly successful, noble people. I have seen depraved persons become ethical and upright. I have seen rascals become gentlemanly, and I have seen wicked people turning into Mahatmas. Since the *svabhava* is something that has been created, there is no reason why it cannot be recreated.

Narayana! *Tapasyaa* (asceticism) is needed for *utkarsha* (upliftment). Vishwamitra was a Kshatriya (of the warrior class). He became a Brahmin by doing *tapasya*. The nature of a warrior was converted into the nature of a Brahmin. This is the influence of *tapasya*.

There is a description in the Shastras that a human child, born to a deer, became a Rishi. There is also a description of a Rishi born in the lowest of lowly castes, and becoming a Sage. Why do you feel convinced that the *svabhava* cannot be changed? What is it that can't be achieved through *tapasya*? Don't be afraid. Don't have doubts. Don't feel disheartened.

Our Shastras describe how Vishwamitra created a new world. Sagar's sons created a new sea, and bound it within its shores. Don't remain unaware of your latent shakti. Know about your dormant powers and use them with enthusiasm. There is nothing you can't do; you can do anything! Apply yourself with full zeal to achieve what you wish to achieve, and know that tapasya done sincerely, has phenomenal results. *Utsaaha* (enthusiasm; zeal) is the most powerful part of our life.

Kriyaasiddhi sattve` vasati mahataam nopakaarane`.

Kriya-siddhi (successful accomplishment) of the Mahapurusha does not lie in the means available to them; it lies in their utsaah.

The most powerful part of the lives of the Mahapurushas is utsaah. Wasn't Mahatma Gandhi alone when he followed his inspiration? What a wonderful achievement he made in his life! Wasn't Mahatma Buddha alone when he followed his path? Weren't Mahavir, Jesus and Mohammed alone? You have seen their amazing greatness! The lingering effect we see today, of our Rishis, Mahatmas, and Teachers – is it not the result of the enthusiastic efforts of these great individuals? Our Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Nimbarkacharya, and other Acharyas' (Teachers) magnificence is seen today. It is the result of their zeal and *gnaana-shakti* (the power of their Gnan) and *kriyaa-shakti* (the power to act).

Every individual has a relationship with the Ishwara. The thread of our *jeevana* (life) is connected to the Ishwara. The flow of our life is attached to Him. If a person pulls at this thread, the Ishwara's shakti manifests in his life, and he becomes capable of doing whatever he seeks to do. Therefore, nobody should feel disheartened in life.

Carry out your duties with full enthusiasm. Use your Gnan-shakti and kriya-shakti wholeheartedly, for achieving good things. You are certain to attain success. The benefits of associating with Mahapurushas will manifest in your svabhava, and it will develop into the finest and noblest nature. Continue doing Satsang (listening to and understanding spiritual discourses).

Hari se` laagaa rahu re` bhaayee, te`ri banata banata bani jaayee.

Remain connected to Hari – Bhagwan, my brother, and you will surely succeed in your spiritual quest.

Svabhaavavijayee bhava.

Succeed in conquering your nature!

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Dharma Ki Shiksha.

The question is asked – ordinary people like us are not able to study the Manusmriti and other books on the Dharma Shastra. Even if we try to read them, we can't understand them. How can we establish Dharma in our daily life?

Narayana! One way is to arrange for your *purohita* (family priest) to learn Sanskrit from a competent teacher. When he becomes learned he will give you *shikshaa* (teaching) about matters pertaining to Dharma.

This is why the *dharma-grantha* (books on Dharma) state that if a purohit makes some mistake in uttering a mantra, the *dosha* (fault) is attributed to the *yajamaana* (the person who pays for the ritual). The yajaman did not carry out his duty of ensuring that the purohit of his *gotra* (line of descent) was well-taught. Therefore, he is responsible for the lack of the priest's proficiency.

Narayana! If you don't know how to do the ritual of Sandhya Vandan, you need a purohit to teach it to you. If you don't know the Gayatri Mantra, you need a purohit to teach it to you. If you don't know what the Manusmriti says, you need a purohit to clarify the Laws of Manu for you.

The Muslims have their Maulvis, and the Christians have their Padres, and the Parsis have their Dasturs. We should also have a similar arrangement for obtaining guidance about our Dharma. Appoint a purohit who will tell you about the *nitya karma* (daily rituals) like the proper way of getting up, sitting, waking up, eating and drinking, speaking and walking, and remain within the framework of decorum and ethics.

There is a young man who has relatives. He would wake up at eight o'clock. He phoned his father at eleven o'clock, and was told that the father had just woken up and was in the toilet. Some days later, the doctor told the gentleman, 'You and your son have very high cholesterol. You must go for morning walks every day if you want to remain healthy. Unless you do this your arteries will be affected and you will get heart trouble.' Maharaj, the man and his son now go jogging every morning at five am!

What I wish to point out is that they are not willing to wake up early for the sake of Dharma, but they are willing to do so for the sake of their health. Yes! They are attached to their body, and their activities are propelled by their attachments. If a lady indicates that she will meet a gentleman at five am, he will stay awake all night in pleasurable anticipation. He will rise betimes and set out well before the appointed hour. This is an activity prompted by desire.

Oh, if a person has a big deal in hand he will stay up all night discussing all the relevant aspects. Maharaj, these businessmen stay awake all night. Their greed for wealth keeps them awake. If they are told, 'You should wake up early and come to Satsang (spiritual discourses)', they will immediately say, 'Maharaj, I have no interest whatsoever in Dharma-karma.' People are interested in detective novels, romantic novels, and historical novels that deal with the dead, but they have no interest in reading books on Dharma.

If you really want, you can acquire an interest in the study of Dharma Shastras. When a person understands that Dharma is important he takes an interest in its intricacies. If you have an interest you will have an inclination to read books on the subject of your interest. If there are

any portions you don't understand fully, you can mark them and ask me when you come to Vrindavan or when I come to here.

We should not follow our *mana* (emotional mind) blindly. You may feel an impulse to do something good today, and do a good deed, but when your *mana* gets out of your control it will drive you to misdeeds. This is why even good deeds should not be done without getting the sanction of Dharma, or a Mahatma, or a learned elder. *Jeevana* (life) should not be *vaasanaa-anusaaree* (according to desires); it should be *shastra-anusaari* (according to the Shastras). It should be *Gurumukhi* (according to what our Guru says).

We should learn the art of living from the teachings of the Mahatmas who have vast experience. We should benefit from the wisdom of the Sat-purushas (people established in the Satya), and our lives should be filled with anand.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Shiksha For A Child.

I was seated on my asana (seat) in Mumbai. Smt. Sneha Rajiv Batra came with her little son to meet me. The child stumbled and hurt his head on my asana. He began to cry. To divert his attention, I told him, 'My child, this chair has hurt you; give it a smack.' The child continued to cry.

Sneha told him, 'My child, kiss the asana that hurt you.' Ashish kissed the chair and stopped crying. He began to laugh and play.

Ashish is about ten or twelve years old now. Whenever I see him, I feel amazed at how happy, well-behaved and sensitive he is. If the mother and father are careful to give such lofty *shiksha* (teachings) to their children, it can result in a truly lofty lifestyle for their children.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Disciplining Children.

Look; times are changing. There are changes in every place, and changes in laws. People's beliefs are changing, and situations keep changing. Science progresses and gives new facilities and dangers.

A child's life should be molded keeping all these factors in mind. If you are at the age of sixty, you must examine yourself to see whether you are trying to bring up your children – or grandchildren – the way your parents brought you up sixty years ago. Children should be disciplined according to present circumstances.

This is a matter that deserves special attention. The youth of today is reaching out beyond today's atmosphere, environment, circumstances, and social and political situations. They will have to work in circumstances of ten, fifteen, twenty and thirty years later.

That being the case, if you try to push your children fifty, or a hundred or five hundred or two thousand years into the past, they will never accept your dictates. They will flout impositions that are unfair and impractical. So, you should keep the changes in the world around in mind, and then lay down the rules for your children.

All will be well if you discipline your children wisely. If your narrow attitude places obstacles in their growth they will rebel. They will refuse to remain within the restrictions that are necessary for their own good.

You would have seen that when a plant rises from the earth, if a brick is placed on the shoot, it grows round the brick and then rises again. This is a natural instinct. Therefore it is extremely important to be alert about our children's upbringing.

If the youngsters are not mature enough to be safe from wrong influences, the restrictions you impose should be just enough to protect them from getting involved in bad company and wrong activities. Disciplining should be judicious and only when essential.

A gentleman from Aligarh University came to meet me one day. We began to talk about Vedanta. Three hours passed. When Shri Udiya Babaji Maharaj came to know of this, he left his hut and came to my hut. My hut was in another corner of the compound. As soon as Baba entered, we all stood up respectfully.

‘Bevakoof (stupid)!’ said Baba. *‘That, which took you twenty years to understand – you want to explain in one day? Come! Get up! Have something to eat and then rest awhile.’*

Narayana! You have fifty or sixty years of experience, and you want to shove it hastily into the brain of your child! How can that be possible? Time is needed for absorbing things. We have to follow the constraints of time. Children cannot suddenly become disciplined – it has to be done gradually, at the right time.

Another point that needs to be kept in mind is that youngsters do not accept orders and lectures. They emulate. It is the nature of a child to behave the way he sees adults behave, especially those he looks up to. You have to behave the way you want your children to behave. They will see your behavior and imitate it. Youngsters do not follow strictures; they learn by example. They have no inclination to listen to sermons or advice. Therefore, in the matter of controlling the behavior of your children, the most important factor is your own behavior.

Discipline yourself first. If you eat jiggery and tell your children that they should not eat jaggery, do you expect them to listen to you? Your words will have no effect. You must, first of all, stop eating jaggery yourself, and then tell the children that they should avoid it. Then they will take you seriously. They will be impressed by what you say. If you lead a disciplined life, you will see that your ideal behavior will bring discipline into your children's lives.

Don't focus on your own background when you make the rules for your children; focus on the world your children will have to face. In future, what we say will be spread all over the world in minutes. We will be able to reach any part of the globe within a few hours. The style of doing business will undergo a complete change. There will be revolutionary changes in the methods of farming. Even languages will undergo changes. We no longer speak the kind of Hindi that was spoken when I was a child. Thus, languages will change, laws will change, and Governments will change. There will be great upheavals in this world.

Bring up your children in such a way that they remain happy in any situation, whichever Government comes into power, whatever the prevailing lifestyle, whatever language is used, and whatever kind of clothing people wear. Your children should have the ability to adapt to the changes in the world. They should be equipped to fit into whichever *de'sha* (place), *vastu* (objects), and *paristhiti* (situation) they find themselves in. In life, one needs to adjust. *Sahishnuta* (tolerance, endurance) is *siddhi* (success; achievement).

'Poore` hain vahee marda, jo hara haala main khusha hain.'

(Only those who can remain happy under all circumstances are poorna – complete.)

‘Raajee hain hum useemain jisme`te`ri raja hai,

yahaan youn bhi vaaha-vaaha hai, vahaan voh bhi vaaha-vaaha hai.’

(I am happy in whatever you choose, whatever happens or doesn’t happen.)

There should be no grudges and no regrets. There should be only anand. When the *antahkarana* (fourfold mind or subtle body) of youngsters is molded in this manner, they will always experience *sukha-shaanti* (complete contentment-inner peace) everywhere and at all times. Even those they interact with will be filled with sukha-shanti-anand.

Keep these factors in mind when you decide about how strict you should be with your children, depending upon their nature and aptitudes. Observe your children closely, with seriousness and impartiality. Investigate the indications and inclinations before making rules for them. Then they are likely to accept your rules without resentment.

Our ancient texts contain this *vidyaa* (knowledge) about raising children. An auspicious day was chosen for the *sanskaara* (rituals that create subtle subconscious impressions to refine the mind) of the child. A square area was prepared in the courtyard, and smeared with cow dung paste. The Puja of Gauri-Ganesh was done. Everything was done with great care to create a sanctified ambience. Different items were placed before the little child – diamonds and pearls, gold and silver, different gems, books, writing implements, weapons, brooms and

brushes, etc. The elders would observe the child's reactions – they saw what he was attracted to. After understanding the child's natural tendencies, they would decide how he should be educated.

You want a common formula for all, but that is not wise. You should study your child's nature thoroughly, and then bring him up accordingly. Give him the education that will enable him to attain his full potential. He should not be allowed to become selfish or proud. Your disciplining will only succeed if you practice what you preach. They should see you make good use of your own abilities. They will have humility if they see you are *nirahankaaree-nirabhimaanee* (free of ego-free of vanity). When your child emulates your disciplined behavior, his life will automatically become disciplined. Don't worry; your disciplined lifestyle will become the tradition in your family.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Marital Disputes.

What should a wife do if the quarrel between her and her husband comes to a stage where he shouts at her, uses foul language, hits her, and tells her to leave his house?

When a couple get married according to Dharma, with Agni Devta (the presiding deity of fire) as the *saakshee* (witness) – or even if they have a registered marriage – the woman is generally expected to have *sahishnuta* (tolerance). If she keeps calm and does not retaliate, the husband's temper and agitations are quieted. As far as possible the wife should take care of her husband's needs, and give him comfort, even if he is a bad-tempered man.

One, there was a heated dispute between an old man and his son. The old man started living separately. The daughter-in-law felt deeply troubled that her old father-in-law should be all alone in his old age, but she could not say anything to her husband.

However, she took her own decision. When her husband finished his early lunch and went off to work, she would go to her father-in-law's flat, cook for him, and serve him his meal and then return to her place. The old man was touched by her affection and concern, and blessed her from the bottom of his heart. Thus, she cooked meals at two establishments, to keep her husband and her father-in-law pleased.

One day her husband came to know about her routine. 'Why do you go there?' he asked. 'We have nothing to do with my father anymore.'

The wife answered with great politeness. 'It makes me feel ashamed to think of my elderly father-in-law cooking his own meals, while you and I enjoy ourselves at home. It is our Dharma to provide for my father-in-

law. If we don't look after him, who will? Please permit me to get the benefit of rendering this service and carrying out my duty.'

'Very well,' said the husband. 'If you have the inclination to serve Father, I will call him and ask him to live with us again. What is the need for him to live separately? You can cook for all of us here. There is no need for you to cook in two houses.'

Narayana! *Se`vaa* (rendering service) should not be given up. Seva results in *pre`ma* (pure love) rising in the heart. In prema there is no dispute. Prema wants only to give *sukha* (comfort and happiness).

Yes! If the husband is depraved, then according to the Dharma Shastra, he is not eligible for conjugal relationship. However, the wife should not stop taking care of his other needs. The principle in the Hindu – or Vedic – Dharma is that the purpose of marriage is not sensual indulgence; it is to restrain lust to one partner. A woman is attracted to many men, and a man is attracted to many women. The purpose of marriage is to curtail this desire to one only person. Therefore, if some occasion arises in your married life where an obstacle arises in your conjugal pleasures, you should not become nervous.

The *vritti* (mental inclination) of seva is to bring metaphysical benefit to the one who does the seva. The habit of serving others is a good habit. It enhances the capacity to tolerate and forgive.

If you do some service to help your husband, and he obtains some benefit by it, you can be sure that he values you in his heart of hearts, and depends upon you. Then, if you are upset about something, he will try to cajole you. Your seva will have become an essential part of his life; he can never let you go.

And yes, if your husband talks wildly when he is angry, you should take recourse in silence. To say, 'Leave my house,' is just an empty threat. It is not meant. One should not give much importance to what is said in a temper. One should understand the prema in the heart. Who will a husband vent his frustration on, if not his wife, who is closest to him? Will he show temper to his neighbor? We can say things impulsively only to those who we are closest to. If your husband becomes *nishthura* (hardhearted), why should you also become nishthur? If he is overcome by some animal instinct and inclined to violence, why should you let yourself be overcome in the same way? You should remain calm and dignified.

Remain calm and be tolerant. Continue to care for him and give him sukha. You will see that your behavior will have its effect. Your husband's behavior will become favorable. The fact is, the moment of an unfavorable crisis is the moment of your test.

Dheeraja dharma mitra aru naaree aapadakaala parakhiye` chaari.

(The true value of courage, Dharma, a friend and a wife are revealed only in times of trouble.)

Narayana! It can happen that circumstances arise when a husband can leave his wife. Similarly, circumstances can arise when a wife can leave her husband. This is not a matter of *adhikaara* (right); it is a matter of *pavitrataa* (purity according to the Shastras) of the individual. It is a matter of personal ethics. Men and women both have two arms and a face, can feel and think. What a husband can do, his wife can also do. Adjustment from both sides is needed for happily married life.

The unanimous opinion of the Shastras is that whereas both the husband and wife are to respect each other and adjust to each other, the wife should, under all circumstances, keep calm. She should be tolerant and forgiving, and look after her husband lovingly. She should fill him with happiness with her love and service. The art of being happily married is, do seva, make the husband happy, and be happy.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

The Solution To Unethical Orders.

A person in Government service has to object to carrying out unethical orders. This results in his career being hampered, and promotion withheld. What is the solution to this problem?

The constitution does not endorse anything unethical. The rules are always in keeping with what is right and proper. The fault lies with the people at the senior and junior levels.

If you love Dharma (the principle of eternal righteousness) it may be possible for you to convince your senior officer and control your juniors. It all depends on your own commitment to Dharma and *sadaachaara* (right behavior).

There was an officer who lived in the district where I was born. He refused to obey an unethical order given by the Chief Minister. As a result, his promotion was blocked. He refused to accept bribes from junior officers who wanted him to do something unethical. He would refuse outright. This is why he was not even a position to buy a car or keep a servant. He did his own cooking. I used to visit him occasionally. He would cook for me, and serve the food lovingly. His lifestyle was extremely *pavitra* (pure, according to the Shastras), *sanyamee* (disciplined), *niyamita* (regulated), and *sadaachaaree* (ethical). He endured every hardship calmly, for the sake of his principles.

My brother, stick to your Dharma even if you have to suffer hardship because of your principles. If you are unable to do this, hand in your resignation. If possible, try to convince your senior and junior colleagues that your conscience does not permit you to do anything unethical. I have seen that higher-ups don't sign the papers themselves

– they make their junior sign, so that if there is an enquiry, it is the one who has signed who gets implicated. They can claim they knew nothing about it. This is the state of affairs. Under the circumstances you must do whatever you can, depending upon your *aatmabala* (the courage of your convictions). If your atmabal is weak you will gradually fall – and you know what happens then.

*Adhodho gaange`yam padamugatam srotamadhunaa,
vive`kabhrashtaanaam bhavati vinipaatah shatamukhah.*

(Just as the Gangaji falls lower and lower, a person who loses his discrimination of right and wrong falls in a hundred ways.)

You know what sadachara is, and you recognize *maryaadaa* (ethical framework). As far as possible, a man should endeavor to remain within the framework of what is right and proper. The person who wants to get something unethical done by you is a *paapee* (sinner). He is also an *aparaadhee* (guilty of wrongdoing) whether he is your junior or senior. There are many kinds of *karma* (actions) – some are done and some are permitted to be done. *Paapa-punya* (sin-spiritual merit) are divided according to the actions.

You would have heard the story of Ratnakar. When this dacoit captured the Rishis and said, ‘I will take away all your possessions’, they asked, ‘For whom are you doing all this?’

‘To provide for my family.’

‘Very well; tell us one thing. The result of your activity is paapa. Will your family members accept their share of the paapa of what you do for them?’

‘Rishis, I have never asked them this question,’ said Ratnakar.

‘Go now and ask them.’

‘You will run away if I go now. What am I to do?’

‘Tie us to a tree, and then go. Ask them and come back and tell us.’

Ratnakar accepted their suggestion. His family members told him categorically, ‘It is your Dharma to provide for us. How you do it is up to you. We will have no share of the paapa you do.’

Ratnakar’s thinking changed instantly. He went running to the Rishis and told them everything. He untied them and fell at their feet. The Rishis Graced him. They gave him the Rama mantra in reverse. They told him to say ‘*maraa-maraa*’. This story is given in the Krittibas Ramayana in Bengali. The Adhyatma Ramayana says:

Aham puraa kiraate`shu kiraataih sahavardhitah,

janmamaatram dvijatvam me`shoodraachaaravratah sadaa.

(I was born a Brahmin, but grew up among dacoits and behaved like a lowly dacoit.)

Narayana! Now you can gauge your Atmabal. If you can remain firm, in keeping with your Atmabal, and work according to Dharma within an ethical framework, do so. It is possible that the progress of your career will be hampered because of your commitment to your principles. It is also possible that your junior officers complain about you, or your senior and junior officers combine to make it impossible for you to work. Anything is possible.

If your atmabal is strong enough, resign from your post. When your atmabal does not permit you to do anything unethical, why don't you hand in your resignation? Why are you sticking on because of your greed for the position? Have faith in Bhagwan. Have faith in your *praarabdha* (destiny created by actions in past lives). Have faith in Prakriti (the laws of Nature). You will never lack food, clothing, and shelter. This is a point worth accepting with full faith.

Jo hatthi raakhai dharma ko, te`hin raakhai karataara.

(Bhagwan looks after the person who adheres to Dharma.)

Measure yourself and see the trend of your thinking, the trend of your actions, the way you walk. Every dilemma of ethics connected to your job has a solution; and that is your atmabal, your ability to endure discomfort, and your understanding. Become *nirbhaya-nirdvandva* (fearless-free of doubts), and say:

Te`re` bhaave` jo karo bhalo-buro sansara,

naaraayana tu baithake` apano bhuvana buhara.

(Let the world do what it like; good or bad. Narayana! You should sit and keep your house clean.)

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

The Conflict Of Aham.

The mother, sister and wife of a man all want his good. The mother wants the good of her son, the sister wants the good of her brother and the wife wants the good of her husband. Since all three desire the good of the same man, they should have goodwill and affection for each other. However, their *Aham* ('I'; ego) creates friction between them. All their interpersonal clashes are because of their ego.

An idol of Hanumanji was found close to a village. The villagers got together and put it upright. A Mahatma came to the village. 'You are all *paapee* (sinners),' he said. 'You have made Hanumanji stand in the sun!' Inspired by the Mahatma, the villagers built a thatched roof over Hanumanji's idol.

A few days later another Mahatma came to the village. 'You are very foolish!' he told the villagers. 'What if the thatch were to catch fire?' He told the villagers to remove the roofing.

Both Mahatmas had *pre`ma* (pure love) for Hanumanji, but their thinking was different. It is the difference in people's thinking that causes *raaga-dve`sha* (attachments-aversions). Conflicting viewpoints become the cause of strife.

People generally manifest the differences in their lives. This turns into 'mine' and 'yours'. The fact is that we, ourselves, create situations that bring sorrow. *Dukha* (sorrow) is not created by the Ishwara. His hands bestow only anand. It is the Aham in people that clashes with the Aham of other people. As soon as the Aham becomes *nir-aham* (absence of ego) all disputes are ended.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Why Didn't You Do What I Wanted?

These days, the most important thing has become 'Everything should be done the way I want.' People say, 'Oh, he did the work well enough, but why didn't he do what I wanted?'

There is a book, written about two thousand years ago. In it there is a mention of *shvashru subhaga nyaaya*' (the justice of the mother-in-law). A Sanyasi went to the door of a house to beg for food. He called out, 'Narayana Hari!' Hearing his call, the daughter-in-law of the house came out. She folded her hands respectfully and said, 'Maharaj, the *roti* (unleavened bread) is not yet ready.' Babaji went off. After he had gone a mile or two he met the mother-in-law. 'Maharaj, didn't you go to my house for roti?' she asked.

'Yes, I did go to your house,' replied the Mahatma.

'Then what happened?' she asked.

'Your *bahu* (daughter-in-law) folded her hands and told me that the roti is not yet ready.'

'Maharaj!' said the *saasa* (mother-in-law) angrily. 'What right did she have to say this to you? Come, Maharaj! Come back to the house with me.' She caught his arm and made him walk back with her.

When they reached the house she called out angrily, 'Bahu! What right do you have, to tell Babaji that the roti is not yet ready?' After she finished scolding her daughter-in-law she went into the house to fetch rotis.

A few minutes later she emerged and told the Mahatma, 'Maharaj, the roti is not yet ready.' Babaji went away quietly.

Tell me, what was the dispute about? The mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law both said the same thing – that the roti was not ready. However, in the opinion of the saas, the bahu had no right to say so; only she had the right!

I have observed that people quarrel meaninglessly. ‘This person may have done a good job, but why didn’t he do it the way I wanted it done?’ Is it not so? All the strife we see is because people hold on to their preferences, and get angry if things aren’t done exactly as they want.

If you truly wish to end quarreling, make your heart more magnanimous. ‘My dear, whatever you want is acceptable to me.’ Just by using the method of giving your consent puts an end to petty disputes.

Rajjaba rosha na keejiye`, koyee kahe` kyon hi?

Hansakara utara deejeeye`, haan baabaa yon hi.

(Don’t get angry with what people say; just smile and say, ‘yes, you are right.’)

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

The Root Of Sorrow.

A man had a horse. He was *dukhi* (sad) if the horse was hungry, he felt *dukhi* when the horse misbehaved, and when the horse was ill. One day he sold the horse. Now the horse became the property of someone else. The man never asked if the horse was hungry or thirsty, well or ill, dead or alive. Do you know why? It is because the horse was no longer his.

There was a plot of land. My grandfather believed it to be his, and so did my father, and so did I. I would feel unhappy if the land was not well watered or farmed properly. I would feel *dukhi* if any animal strayed into our land and ate up or damaged the crop. I felt happy when the crop was good.

Once there was a Government survey. I was told that the land did not belong to our family. My grandfather, father, and I had all been mistaken in thinking that we were the owners. The land actually belonged to our neighbor, but he had not known it was his. He, too, was under the impression that it belonged to us.

When the official papers established that the land did not belong to us, our *ahamtaa* (feeling of 'I') and *mamataa* (feeling of 'mine') vanished.

Narayana! This body and the people related to it are mistakenly thought to be 'mine'. We believe it to be 'mine' because of *aviveka* (lack of discrimination), *agnaana* (lack of Gnan), and *moha* (delusion). Once the realization comes that they are not ours, why should they cause *dukha* (sorrow) for us? There is nothing to feel sad about. As soon as a person becomes *nir-aham* (free of the feeling of being an

individual) and *nor-mama* (free of the feeling of possessiveness) we become liberated from all dukha.

Before I became a Sanyasi I was subject to *sootaka* (a period of quarantine after the death of a family member) for my father, grandfather, and others. We would not touch any visitors who did not have sootak. After the ritual of the funeral pyre was over, we would sit on one side, on a folded blanket. Even other family members did not touch the person who had done the *daaha-karma* (the action of setting fire to the dead body).

Now that I am a Sanyasi I am no longer subject to *sootak-paatak* whether someone dies or a baby is born. I am the same person; the births and deaths occur in the same family. Where did this sootak-paatak come from, and where did it go? I became free of all relationships as soon as I became a Sanyasi. It is like a couple getting married in a Registrar's Office and getting divorced in Court. In this, the dukha is removed. All the dukha in the world arises from *main* ('I') and *me`raa* (mine).

Before becoming a Sanyasi I would think, 'If I become a Sanyasi, the people who are dependent on me will become dukhi.' However, the fact is that everybody was quiet as long as I believed the responsibility was mine. The day I gave up my obligations for their upkeep, there were many people who felt that it was now their responsibility to look after my family members and dependents. As long as the responsibility was mine I had to go here and there, getting two rupees and five rupees. The day I became a Sanyasi, the people who were our students by tradition – they were spread over some fifty neighboring villages –

said, ‘Guruji has become a Sanyasi. Who will look after his wife and children? It is now our responsibility to provide for them.’

Narayana! People who believe that everything rests on them are mistaken. When one person gives up his responsibility, the whole of Creation takes it up. There is *bandhana* (bondage) in *sambandha* (relationships), and bandhan is the cause of dukha.

‘Maani maani bandhana mein aayo.’

(I became bound by my own false beliefs.)

Cutting away the chains of relationships caused by the feelings of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ results in dukha being removed. Therefore – ‘*samabandhe`saavadhaana`*’ – be careful about developing relationships.

Corpses are burnt at Varanasi’s Manikarnika Ghat. There is not a single hour in twenty four, when there is no corpse being burnt. I used to go there and sit at a spot from where I could see the funeral pyres. I felt no sorrow. However, the day I saw a known person among the mourners, I would ask, ‘Who is it?’ When I was told that some connection of mine had passed away, I felt dukha. ‘This is very sad,’ I would say. ‘He was a good man.’

The pot may be unbaked or well baked; red or black; filled with *gangaajala* (water from the holy Gangaji) or *sharaaba* (liquor) – it is not you, and it is not yours. You have neither any need, nor any right, to remove it, break it, or change it. You are merely an observer of the pot. You will become dukhi when you consider the pot to be ‘I’ or ‘mine’. When you cease to relate to it, you will be sukhi.

When we walk or go in a car, we pass plots of land, buildings, and people, but we don't consider them to be 'I-mine'. Therefore, we are not concerned with the land or who it belongs to. Nor are we bothered about who lives in the buildings we pass or where the people on the road are going, or what they are doing. Sita-Rama! This world is also like a playground we pass when we go from one place to another. None of it is 'I-mine'. All dukha is connected to 'I-mine'.

Narayana! Prakriti (Nature) never gives dukha to anybody. It is the relationship of 'I-mine' that gives dukha. The Ishwara never gives dukha to anyone – He is *parama-aananda svaroop*a (the essence of Supreme Bliss). No karma that results in dukha can ever be done by the Ishwara. Dukha is not a part of the Ishwara's Creation; it is created by the *jeeva* (an individual; the Atma attached to a body). The jeeva creates dukha for himself because of his *avive`ka* (lack of discrimination). Dukha is created by our own *naa-samajhee* (lack of right understanding). A person who is dukhi is also an *a-gnaanee* (one who lacks Gnan). An agnani is dukhi and caught by the fear of death. One who knows himself to be the Sacchidananda (Sat=pure existence, Chit=pure consciousness, Anand=pure bliss – the Brahman) can have no fear of death, agnan, or dukha.

*Paramaananda svaroop*a tu nahin tome` dukha le`sha.

(Your essence is supreme bliss. There is no trace of dukha in you.)

Know your own swarup – it is the non-dual Sacchidananda Brahman. It is not separate from the whole. Use the *vive`ka* (discrimination) of *drashtaa-drishya* (the Atma who sees – the world that is seen). This vivek is the enemy of agnan and na-samajhee. The drashta-drishya vivek will destroy your *ahankaara* (pride) and *mamakaara* (feeling of

ownership). As soon as you become *nir-aham* (free of the subtle ego of being an individual) your bondage – caused by agnan – will be severed.

As soon as you are freed of the bondage of agnan, all your dukha will be removed. You will experience sukha, *shaanti* (mental peace), and anand. Lift yourself out of the confines of your individual ego. The root of all sorrow is 'me' and 'mine'. The unfailing medicine for destroying sorrow is to destroy the ahankara-mamata in our self.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

This Piece Of Flesh.

In what are we trapped? See for yourself – a noose is placed round you. It is a piece of flesh that you consider to be your 'I'. Crows will come and peck at you, kites will tear you into shreds, vultures will eat you, and dogs will devour you. You believe yourself to be a piece of flesh, and think yourself to be very intelligent?

You, yourself, believe 'I am a *paapee* (sinner). I am a *punyaatmaa* (one who does good deeds and has great spiritual merit).' If you were to say, 'No, no! I don't believe I am any of these,' I tell you truly that you will continue to reiterate this as long as all is well. When you fall ill and your temperature rises to a hundred and five, and you feel too sick to do anything, you will be quick to think, 'I am a *paapi*.' And, when you do some good deed, you will think, 'I am a *punyatma*.' That is enough to ensnare you.

It is a delusion to think, 'I am a great Dharmi (one who adheres to Dharma), I am a great Gnani (one who has Gnan), I am a great *pre`mee* (one who has pure love for Bhagwan)'. All such feelings are *de`haabhimaana* (pride of being a gross physical form). You get tied to this false pride and get trapped.

Keep in mind that the premis died, the Gnanis died, the Dharmis died. Swarga (Heaven) was destroyed, Narak (Hell) was destroyed, the Devtas (presiding deities) died, and the *daanava* (Demons) died. Everything wanes.

You are enmeshed in the net of believing yourself to be the body. The hunter – Time – will catch you. Then you will be confined in the cage of *de`sha* (space). Since you have placed yourself in the dirty noose of

your gross physical body, someone may kill and eat you. Oh, my brother! Understand this now! You are *bodha-svaroop*a (the essence of Gnan). Use the sword of Atmagnan (the Gnan that you are the Atma, not the body) to sever the ropes of the dehabhimana you are bound by. Experience that you are the form of Gnan, and be *sukhi* (fully content).

Tell me, what is this sword of Gnan? You see, it is not 'this Gnan, this Gnan.'

This, this, this is mortal; it is subject to destruction. That, that, that, is also subject to destruction. You, you, you, are subject to change. And Gnan? Gnan never changes. The eye changes, the ear changes, the face changes. Everything in the world that is seen is subject to change.

Gnan, however, does not change. Those who believe that Gnan changes mistake the destruction of the objects of Gnan to be the destruction of Gnan itself. '*Ghato jaatah*' – the ghata (pot, symbolizing the body) was created. '*Ghato nashtah*' – the pot was broken. And Gnan? Gnan does not get destroyed. The person who saw the pot being created also saw it being broken, but the Gnan remained unchanged. The pot breaks but the eye that sees it does not break. The *buddhi* (intellect) does not break. The buddhi breaks, but the Atma doesn't break.

When the Atma believes itself to be bound within any *de'sha* (space), *kaala* (time) and *vastu* (object), that is the Atma (body) that breaks. It is the *parichhinna* (separate; fragmented) Atma that is cut up, beaten, and dies. The *a-parichhinna* (not fragmented; whole) Atma is the *asanga* (unattached), *advaya* (non-dual) Sacchidananda (Sat= pure existence, Chit=pure consciousness, Anand=pure bliss; the Brahman)

brahm-svaroopā (the essence of the Brahman). Know your Self to be the *aparichhinna* Brahman. Know your *poornataa* (wholeness). Understand this, experience it.

O *saakshee* (witness) Baba! Listen! You are the *saakshi*, and all others are the *kartaa-bhoktaa* (people who do the actions – the ones who experience joy and sorrow)? You will have to be a *karta-bhokta*; you cannot remain an *akartaa-abhoktaa* (not the doer of the action – not the one who experiences joy and sorrow). O *drashtaa* (the one who sees) Babu! Listen! You are the *drashta* and all others are *paapee-punyaatmaa* (sinners-people with spiritual merit)? You will have to be a *paapi-punyatma*; you cannot remain an *asanga drashta*. The rules that apply to all will apply to you.

As long as you are bound by the *upaadhee* (a superimposition connected to something) of the *de'ha* (gross physical body) and the *upadhi* of karma, you will not be able to experience your *swarup* of being the *asanga sakshi drashta*. When you negate the superimpositions of the *deha*, karma, and *bhoga* (indulgences), you will experience your *vishuddha gnaana-svaroopā* (pristine essence of Gnan). When the *upaadhee-apavaada* (superimposition-negation) are done, then the person experiences '*bodhoham*' – I am pure Gnan.

It is the *buddhi* (intellect) that knows the *Ishwara*. It is *buddhi* that knows the *jeeva*, and it is *buddhi* that knows the *jagat* (world). This *buddhi* keeps flashing on the *Aham-Aham-Aham* (I-I-I) in this body. As soon as the feeling of *Aham* (being a separate identity) is destroyed you get the *anubhava* (experience), '*vishuddha-bodhoham*' (I am pristine Gnan). It is essential that the *Aham* in the *aabhaasa* (false perception) should be destroyed; let the *abhasa* remain. I have told you that the

karta-bhokta takes birth and dies. Let it. Let it go to Swarga and Narak. Let the deha die and live.

Understand '*koham*' – who am I? I am not the abhasa. I am not the *chidaabhaasa* (a limited consciousness); I am *chit-svaroopa* (the essence of pure consciousness). I am the *adviteeya* (non-dual) *che`tan* (consciousness), *saakshee* (witness). My identification with the abhasa that is my body, is false. Let the abhasa remain; what is needed is to remove the feeling that it is my Aham (I). The negation of my Aham in the chidabhasa is the realization that the Atma is chit-swarup.

*Aarabhyate`jeevajagatparaatmavichaarabhe`de`na matam samastam,
isdam trayam yaavadaham matibhyaam sarvottamaaham
matishoonyaishthaa.*

The highest *nishthaa* (firm faith) is to be free of the belief that you are a separate entity. Look, Samadhi is not what this nishtha means. To believe this lump of flesh to be your 'I' is a dirty noose that you are caught in. You have become trapped in the net of dehabhimana. Use Atmagnan to free yourself from this false impression. The body you believe yourself to be is not your Atma. You are not separate from the entirety of the non-dual Parabrahm Paramatma. Experience yourself as His swarup and be happy.

*De`haabhimaanapaashe`na chiram baddhosi putraka,
bodhoham gnaankhange`na tannishkrittya sukhee bhava.*

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Change Your Drishti.

This happened in Mumbai. It was during the rainy season. Swami Shri Prempuriji and I were going somewhere in a car. The driver drove slowly, with care, because the road was wet and slushy. A taxi overtook us at speed, splashing water from the road straight into Swamiji's mouth, because Swamiji's lips were usually parted, since he had no teeth. Our clothes were also spattered with muddy water. It was a very unpleasant experience.

Our driver's ire was roused. 'I will teach that blighter a lesson!' he declared. 'I'll give him a taste of his own medicine!' as he began to drive fast.

Swamiji said, 'My brother, why are you getting angry? I have taken Bhagwan's *charana-amrita* (the elixir – water – with which Bhagwan's feet have been washed) many times, but this is the first time I have had the charanamrita of a car! The car is also a form of Bhagwan, and its charanamrita came straight into my mouth by itself! Oh! Just see the state of our clothes! How different is the beauty of mud! It reminds me of Bhagwan's Varaha Avatara, when He assumed the form of a boar!' Hearing Swamiji's words, the driver and I both started to smile. The driver's anger cooled automatically.

Narayana! *Dukha* (sorrow) can be removed by a *yukti* (trick; change of outlook). *Dukha* can be removed by the intellect. The intellect of a Mahatma ranges from a *trina* (blade of grass) to the Brahman. Associating with a Mahatma purifies the intellect. A limpid *vive'ka* (discrimination between the Satya and that which is not the Satya) is awoken. The proximity of a Mahatma makes the intellect capable of grasping subtleties. The presence and blessings of elders who are wise

gifts us with innumerable methods by which we can convert dukha into sukha. It enables us to overcome the biggest problems and setbacks with a laugh. Therefore, obtain the Satsang (spiritual discourses) of the Mahapurushas, and change your *drishti* (viewpoint). This is how you can save yourself from dukha.

Uttishthata jaagrita praapya varaan nibodhata. Sukhee bhava. Sukham chara.

Arise! Awake! Obtain Gnan. Be happy. Stay happy!

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

A Mosquito Bit Me.

Listen to a story. It is not really appropriate for a Sadhu to talk about, but I will tell you anyway. A husband and wife came to meet me one day. The wife had a strip of Band-aid on her neck. When they had bowed down and sat comfortably, I asked the wife how she got hurt. She blushed and glanced at her husband. 'A mosquito bit me,' she said. You would have understood who that mosquito was!

All the *dukha* (suffering) that comes into our life is given by our *pati-parameshwara* (the Parameshwara who is our 'pati' – the one who takes care of us). He has given us a gentle smack to awaken us from our slumber. It is He who has bitten us. It is He who gives us a pinch. If your focus goes towards Him for even a while, your dukha will disappear.

If you truly want to save yourself from dukha, attach yourself to the Prabhu seated in your heart. Develop a relationship with Him. Laugh with Him, talk to Him, play with Him, eat with Him, dance with Him, and frolic with Him.

See life as a game. Remain happy. Accept dukha as His *prasaada* (food that is offered to Bhagwan and distributed as a blessing). Pray earnestly to the Ishwara in your heart, who is the dearest of all.

Main mara jaaoun, tu Prabhu jeevai,

tu-hi-tu, prabhu ke`vala tu.

(Let me be no more, Prabhu! You live. Only You, Prabhu, You alone remain!)

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!

Lead A Simple Life.

A human being should lead a simple life. There should be nothing artificial in your life. Wake up early, bathe, take Bhagwan's name, and finish your household chores.

Some people keep their *maalaa* (prayer beads) in their hand all day. Their *japa* (ritual chanting) is not done properly. Such *japa* is not effective. Many people tell me, 'I keep y mala in my hand, but it keeps falling from my hand.'

Narayana! No extreme is good. It is best to wake up early, bathe, do bhajan, (loving worship; singing devotional songs) for an hour or two. You should also do activities that are a method of obtaining Moksha (liberation from the cycle of rebirth), like Satsang (listening to spiritual discourses) and *svaadhyaya* (reading books on Bhakti, Gnan, etc). Nor should activities for Artha (worldly benefits), Kama (fulfillment of worldly desires), and Dharma be neglected.

Vyavahaara (worldly interaction) and *paramaarth*a (the supreme achievement) should be well-balanced. When a person does *ati* (excess) in one, it gives rise to contrary emotions. Excess always creates opposition. *Ati sarvatra varjaye`t'* (excess is always forbidden).

My brother, just as all humans are born, live for sixty years or more, and carry out their activities – pass your life in an uncomplicated manner. Keep chanting 'Rama-Rama'. Go on doing your work. Be happy within yourself. Be straightforward.

Rama! Rama! Rama! Rama!